

Canyon Guides International (CGI) provides a path to an international professional canyon guide certification that is based on validating four things: documenting experience, testing knowledge, assessing technical skills, and verifying leadership skills.

This document is provided as a guide for those interested in pursuing certification.

*Canyoneering vs canyoning — the difference is merely geographical or cultural. You will see the term canyoneering used in this document, but the two terms are interchangeable.*

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## Certification - Step by Step

See **APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS**

### Step 1 — Become a Member

- ☐ 1A. Register and pay dues at: <https://canyonguidesinternational.org/membership>
- ☐ 1B. Create your Member Profile at: <https://canyonguidesinternational.org/members>
- ☐ 1C. Complete Membership Information at: <https://canyonguidesinternational.org/login>

### Step 2 — Submit your Application

- ☐ 2A. Use the online form: <https://my.forms.app/form/6282470cb838185b936f4c93>
- ☐ 2B. Submit supporting documentation to: [certification@canyonguidesinternational.org](mailto:certification@canyonguidesinternational.org)

*When you have completed Steps 1 and 2 you will be assigned to a CGI Advisor who will help guide you through the completion of your certification requirements.*

### Step 3 — Complete the Requirements for Certification

- ☐ 3A. Pass an Online Exam:  
<https://www.classmarker.com/online-test/start/?quiz=yvv5ec2dd7a17238>
- ☐ 3B. Pass hands-on training/assessment to demonstrate technical skills
- ☐ 3C. Pass in-canyon guiding assessment(s)
- ☐ 3D. Submit Peer Reviews from eligible peers:  
<https://my.forms.app/form/62825f14b838185b936f8244>

## Certification Overview

Professional canyon guide certification is available through Canyon Guides International for:

- Aspiring guides seeking training and assessment that leads to certification.
- Individuals who feel they have acquired the necessary knowledge and skills and wish to consolidate their credentials for certification by challenging assessments.
- Individuals who already hold certification from another organization who are seeking recognition from Canyon Guides International.

Certification requires documented experience, references from other canyoneers who are familiar with your abilities, completion of an online exam, hands-on technical skills evaluation(s) and in-canyon guiding assessment(s). Once you have completed all of the requirements and received certification you can take great pride in your accomplishment and in knowing your certification meets and exceeds international standards for professional canyon guides.

- There is no certification prerequisite for pursuing Level 1 or Level 2 certification with CGI. You must, however, already hold Level 2 certification from CGI or another recognized organization prior to pursuing Level 3 or Level 4 certification.
- Guides who hold current certification from another recognized organization, equivalent to CGI Level 1, 2 or 3 may receive CGI certification at Level 1 or Level 2 without hands-on technical skills assessment or in-canyon guiding assessment. Some requirements for CGI certification at Level 3 may be waived, determined on a case-by-case basis after review of your current certification level.
- Recognized organizations whose training and evaluations have been predetermined to meet CGI standards include, but are not limited to the following: ACA, ACE, AFC, AIC, CIC, NCB, ICOPro, ICAN, NZOIA, SOA and UKCG.
- If you hold a current certification from any other organization, please contact CGI. We will be happy to evaluate the program to consider if it meets our equivalency standards.
- If you are uncertain how your current level of certification from any organization equates to CGI certification levels, contact us at CGI.



## Certification Fees

The fees associated with certification include annual membership dues — paid directly to Canyon Guides International through registration on the CGI website — and fees for training and assessments — paid directly to the CGI Certified Guide or CGI Certified Instructor/Evaluator who conducts the training or assessment.

### Annual Membership Dues

Canyon Guides International offers two levels of membership:

- Aspirant Membership for Level 1 and 2 guides. Dues are currently \$45 per year
- Professional Membership for Level 3 and 4 guides. Dues are currently \$85 per year

### Training and Assessment Fees

CGI Certified Guides and CGI Certified Instructors/Evaluators set their fees based on the number of days required for the training/assessment and expenses (which vary by geographic location). CGI Certified Guides and CGI Certified Instructors/Evaluators pay 15% of the fees they charge for training and assessments to Canyon Guides International.

## CGI Certification Levels

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### Level 1 - Aspirant Canyon Guide

This certification level is ideal for those seeking an entry-level certification as a foundation for gaining additional guiding experience working as an apprentice or assistant guide before pursuing higher levels of certification.

**SCOPE OF PRACTICE** — Works only under the direct supervision of a lead guide (Level 2 or higher) who is working well within his/her own Scope of Practice.

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### Level 2 - Fixed Site / Single Pitch Canyon Guide

Fixed Site / Single Pitch Canyon Guide is a certification available to individuals who either (a) guide fewer than three canyons that all have similar characteristics, hydrology and emergency response requirements, or (b) guide easy canyons with simple, straight-forward anchors and rigging (single-point natural anchors, bolted anchors, basic deadman anchors).

**SCOPE OF PRACTICE** — Only leads canyons that have been previously descended by the guide; with well-established logistics, anchors, rigging, and emergency response procedures. Longest rappel in canyon is less than half of one rope length; maximum rappel length 30 meters. With limited verified rescue skills, the guide rigs releasable contingency systems for rappels. Guide provides top rope belays for clients unless specific situation makes it unfeasible.

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### Level 3 — Pro Canyon Guide

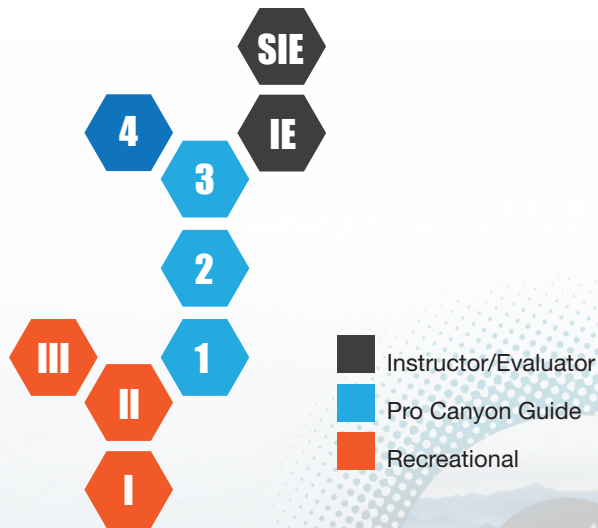
CGI certified Pro Canyon Guides are individuals who have attained and demonstrated a high level of technical competence through rigorous assessment that meets and exceeds international standards. CGI certification provides a decisive tool for choosing the right guide/instructor to help clients and students achieve their canyoneering objectives.

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### Level 4 - Master Canyon Guide

CGI certified Master Canyon Guides are individuals who progressed from Pro Canyon Guide to attain a level of technical proficiency that represents the pinnacle of guiding excellence.

## Instructor/Evaluator Certification



Teaching canyoneering skills to others involves more than technical competence. Effective instructors must be good communicators who use an array of teaching strategies to accommodate students' learning styles.

Canyon Guides International offers Instructor Development Training and Assessment as an add-on for CGI certified guides. The training program is open to guides who are CGI certified Level 2 or higher. Instructor/Evaluator certification is open to guides who are CGI certified Level 3 or higher.

CGI Instructors/Evaluators offer standardized curriculums for both recreational canyoneers and aspiring professional canyon guides.

## Recreational Canyoneering

The CGI-recommended training curriculum for recreational canyoneering includes three levels:

- I. Basic Canyoneering
- II. Technical Canyoneering
- III. Advanced Canyoneering / Canyon Leader



## Swift Water Rescue

Successful completion of a swift water rescue course, or a professional level canyoneering course with a practical swift water component, is required for CGI certification at Level 3 and Level 4. It is not required, but **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** for certification at Level 1 and Level 2.

General knowledge of hydrology is tested as part of the online exam. But it is imperative that all professional canyon guides also demonstrate their competence and confidence working in swift water environments.

For a swift water rescue course to meet this requirement for CGI certification it should include the following skills in the curriculum:

- stream hydrology and hazards
- personal equipment
- assessing risk
- medical considerations
- victim/casualty management
- communication
- swift water swimming techniques
- strainer swim
- entrapment rescue
- shallow water techniques
- rescue throw bag use
- tethered rescues
- line crossing methods
- tensioned diagonals

## Desert Canyon Techniques

There are a few areas in the world where the sport of canyoneering is practiced in canyons that are primarily dry or semi-dry. Most notably the Colorado Plateau in the United States, which includes southern Utah and northern Arizona, and parts of the Middle East.

The techniques used by both recreational canyoneers and professional canyon guides to descend canyons in these areas often fall outside the international norm.

Techniques include:

- Pothole escapes
- Partner assisted down-climbs
- Stemming
- Deadman anchors
- Sequencing human or marginal anchors
- “Ghosting”

In the absence of the challenges created by flowing water in canyons, these techniques add challenge to dry canyons that might otherwise be missing. They are also employed by some people who have adopted an anti-bolt mindset.

### Desert Canyon Elective

Many of the skills and techniques covered in the training and assessments included in the standard CGI curriculum (e.g. anchors, rigging, rescue) have application in desert canyons. Skills and techniques that are unique to desert environments are considered elective in nature and covered by CGI instructors who operate in those areas.



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Is there a first aid requirement for certification?**

Certified guides are expected to pursue the level of first aid training and certification that meets the standards for professional guides in the geographic areas and jurisdictions where they work or intend to work.

### **How long does CGI certification last?**

Your certification will remain valid indefinitely, provided you (a) continue working as an active professional canyon guide (minimum 10 days per year), (b) keep your member profile current on the CGI website, and (c) earn a minimum of 10 continuing education credits every year.

### **How are continuing education credits earned?**

Continuing education credits can be earned based on these 3 categories ...

#### Category A (1 credit per day)

- Volunteer for a canyoneering-related service project
- Participate in a Leave No Trace course
- Participate in a natural history course, canyon related topics (e.g. geology, hydrology)

#### Category B (2 credits per day)

- Participate in a technical rope rescue or swift water rescue course conducted by any recognized training organization
- Participate in a wilderness first responder course (or equivalent) conducted by any recognized training organization
- Participate in an outdoor leadership course conducted by any recognized training organization

#### Category C (3 credits per day)

- Participate (as either a student or assistant instructor) in a guide training course conducted by a CGI certified Instructor/Evaluator
- Participate (as either a student or assistant instructor) in an instructor development course conducted by a CGI certified Instructor/Evaluator
- Participate in a technical skills practice event conducted by a CGI certified canyon guide.
- Participate in a CGI canyon guide rendezvous
- Submit to an in-canyon assessment by a CGI certified Instructor/Evaluator

## CGI Logos and Graphics

Use of CGI (Canyon Guides International) logos and graphics is limited to CGI Certified Canyon Guides — Level 1, 2, 3 and 4; CGI Certified Instructors/Evaluators; and CGI Accredited Programs and is subject to the Logo Use Policy outlined below.

Registered Members who are not certified by CGI are not authorized to use any CGI logo or graphic in any form or for any purpose. Registering as either an Aspirant Member or Professional Member of CGI does not suggest any form of certification by CGI.

### LOGO USE POLICY

Applicable to all Logos of Canyon Guides International (CGI)

For programs that employ a number of CGI certified and non-certified individuals, logos may only be used next to the individual's bio who holds the certification. Text must state who holds the certification. The logos may not be used to imply that all employees, owners or partners in a business are certified.

Individuals must maintain current certification with CGI to use the logos. Individuals who have allowed their certification to lapse may not use the logos or advertise himself or herself as CGI certified until their certification is current.

Participation in or successful completion of any course or curriculum conducted by a CGI certified guide or instructor does not warrant the use of any of the logos. If you wish to state that you have completed a CGI training course, you may do so only if you clearly state that you are not certified, you are still in training and have yet to complete or pass the entire certification process.

### Failure to Adhere to Logo Use Policy

Individuals or programs found to be in violation of the CGI Logo Use Policy will be given 30 days to rectify and/or remove any unauthorized use of the logos or misleading text from any and all advertising. CGI will notify the individual or program via email or mail stating what must be done to rectify the situation. Failure to comply with the CGI Logo Use Policy and directives from CGI within 30 days of receiving notification will result in the individual or company losing its CGI certification or accreditation for 12 months.

## APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

The instructions that follow are provided to assist you with the completion of your application for guide certification. The most commonly received questions are answered in this document. After reviewing this document carefully, if you still have questions you may contact us by email at:

[certification@canyonguidesinternational.org](mailto:certification@canyonguidesinternational.org)

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### Step 1 — Become a Member

#### 1A. Register and Pay Dues

<https://canyonguidesinternational.org/membership>

- Paid Aspirant Membership is a prerequisite for certification — Level 1 and Level 2 — and is an ongoing condition for maintaining certification.
- Paid Professional Membership is a prerequisite for certification — Level 3 and Level 4 — and is an ongoing condition for maintaining certification.

You may choose to register as an Aspirant Member now and upgrade to Professional Member later once you have completed all other requirements for Level 3 certification. Dues will be prorated when you upgrade.

In the navigation bar, click on “Membership”, then follow the prompts on subsequent pages.





## 1B. Create your Member Profile

<https://canyonguidesinternational.org/login>

Once you have become a member, click on the “Login” link in the navigation bar. The page that opens will be your Membership Information page.



While you are logged in you will see a “Profile” link in the navigation bar. Clicking on it will take you to your Member Profile where you will see links to other pages in your member area.



**Reviewing your Member Profile will be part of the application process.**


**PLUS** — all of the information in your Member Profile is visible to the public. When visitors to our website find your listing in the Member Directory and click on your link, they will be taken directly to your Member Profile. It provides an opportunity for you to present yourself and your services to potential clients and students.

Member Profile features are similar to a personal Facebook page. Your Profile Photo should be similar to what you would use for a passport. An ideal Cover Image (background) will be one that showcases your guiding services or the type of canyon you guide.

[View](#) [Edit](#) [Change Profile Photo](#) [Change Cover Image](#)

Click on “Edit” to update all of your basic profile information. This should include methods of contact. If you do not have a website, you may include a link to your social media page; however, this is not a required field.

You will see links to other pages and features that are also similar to Facebook. Activity is similar to the news feed on Facebook. Members can join and create groups, add friends, send private messages, etc.

[Home](#) [Profile](#) [Activity](#) [Groups](#) 2 [Friends](#) 12 [Messages](#) [Notifications](#)  
 [Membership](#) [Settings](#)

## 1C. Complete Membership Information

<https://canyonguidesinternational.org/login>

**Reviewing your Membership Information will be part of the application process. This information is only visible to you and to CGI admins.**

**NOTE: This is not the same as the new member registration page.**

The data fields for your Membership Information are presented to you when you register as a member, but you should return to that page to insure all information is complete and accurate.

Once you have registered, each time you log in to the website you will be directed to your personal Membership page. You can also access the page from the link in your member area.

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## Step 2 — Submit your Application

### 2A. Use the Online Form

<https://my.forms.app/form/6282470cb838185b936f4c93>

Once completed, the Application Form needs to be scanned and saved as a PDF document and sent as an email attachment to Canyon Guides International at:

### 2B. Submit Supporting Documentation

Supporting documents should be scanned and saved in PDF format. Submit the PDF documents as email attachments to this address:

[certification@canyonguidesinternational.org](mailto:certification@canyonguidesinternational.org)

- professional canyon guide certification, current or expired
- related professional certification (e.g. climbing guide, rescue technician)
- professional guide training
- technical canyoneering training
- first aid training/certification
- swift water rescue training/certification

*NOTE: When you have completed Steps 1 and 2 you will be assigned to a CGI Advisor who will review your formal training, experience and existing credentials and make recommendations to put you on the most efficient path toward completing your requirements for certification.*



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## Step 3 — Complete the Requirements for Certification

### 3A. Online Exam

<https://www.classmarker.com/online-test/start/?quiz=yvv5ec2dd7a17238>

The online exam is designed to measure your general knowledge about a variety of canyoneering-related topics. All questions on the exam are either (1) multiple choice or (2) true or false. There is a time limit for completing the exam. You may schedule a time to take the exam at your convenience. There is a small fee to take the exam. If you do not pass on your first attempt you may retake it one more time without paying an additional fee.

NOTE: The online exam presents random questions from select topics so there will be some variation in the exam between your first attempt and each subsequent attempt.

#### Topics covered in the exam include:

- Logistics and Trip Planning
- Risk Management
- Meteorology and Flash Flood Awareness
- Map Reading and Canyon Topos
- Leave No Trace Ethics
- Rope and Equipment Care
- Communication
- Principles - Anchors and Rigging
- Mechanical Advantage, Friction, Vector Forces
- Hydrology
- First Aid and Emergency Response

### **3B. Technical Skills Training/Assessment**

Technical skills training and assessments are designed to evaluate your ability to perform objective tasks in five categories:

- personal skills - on rope and on rock
- knots, anchors and rigging
- client care
- rescue
- critical thinking and problem solving

Consult with your CGI Advisor to make arrangements for your training or assessment.

### **3C. In-Canyon Guiding Assessment**

Many technical skills can be assessed during training or by challenge assessment at a local cliff. But no assessment is complete without a portion of it being conducted in context, in a canyon environment, ideally with “real” clients.

For working guides the in-canyon assessment(s) could involve the assessor shadowing a commercial trip with clients. Another option would be to offer a trip on the Canyoneering Karma Meetup Group (or similar) with the certification candidate leading the trip and an assessor shadowing. There may be other options depending on your situation.

Consult with your CGI Advisor to make arrangements for your training or assessment.

## Assessment Progressions

**Level 1, Aspirant Canyon Guide** — Level 1 guides may be trained and certified by any CGI Certified Guide, Level 2 or higher. Certification may be awarded based on instructor evaluation during a Level 1 training course or by challenging the assessment.

**Level 2, Fixed Site / Single Pitch Canyon Guide** — Level 2 guides may be trained and certified by any CGI Certified Guide, Level 3 or higher. Certification may be awarded based on instructor evaluation during a Level 2 training course or by challenging the assessment.

**Level 3, Pro Canyon Guide** — Level 3 guides may be trained and certified by CGI Certified Instructors/Evaluators who are CGI Certified Guides, Level 3 or higher. Certification may be awarded based on instructor evaluation during a Level 3 training course or by challenging the assessment.

**Level 4, Master Canyon Guide** — Level 4 guides may be trained and certified by CGI Certified Instructors/Evaluators who are CGI Certified Guides, Level 4 or higher. Certification may be awarded based on instructor evaluation during a Level 3 training course or by challenging the assessment.

### Assessment outcomes are based on the score you receive as follows:

- Pass with qualifying score required for certification at target level.
- Pass with qualifying score required for certification, but at lower-than-target level.
- Fail to receive a qualifying score required for certification.



## 3D. Submit Peer Reviews

You must submit two Peer Reviews from peers or mentors. The eligibility of individuals authorized to submit these reviews is outlined below. Ask the individuals who submit your reviews to use our online Peer Review Form.

<https://my.forms.app/form/62825f14b838185b936f8244>

**For Level 1** — If you are pursuing Level 1 certification the reviews may come from anyone who has prior experience descending technical canyons with you.

**For Level 2** — If you are pursuing Level 2 certification the reviews must come from individuals who have had prior experience descending technical canyons with you while you served in either a lead or assistant lead capacity with groups (commercial or non-commercial).

**For Level 3** — If you are pursuing Level 3 certification the reviews must come from professional canyon guides who have had prior experience descending at least two different technical canyons with you while you served in a lead capacity with commercial groups.

**For Level 4** — If you are pursuing Level 4 certification the reviews must come from a professional canyon guide who is certified by CGI or another recognized organization. The individuals submitting the reviews must have had prior experience descending at least five different technical canyons with you while you served in a lead capacity with commercial groups.