



JOURNEYMAN SMITH APPLICANT

Eligibility:

A Regular (Apprentice Smith) member may take the performance test with a Master Smith following two (2) years of membership in the ABS. However, an applicant is not eligible to apply for Journeyman Smith judging and rating at the Annual show and meeting, until he/she has been a member of the ABS for three (3) years with the anniversary based on the date of the annual ABS business meeting at the Blade Show. For example, if, a member joins in November, the months from November to the end of May will be more or less excess time, as the year count will begin the following May or June, depending on the date of the show. Although your annual ABS membership must be renewed each January 1st, the time requirement runs from Blade Show to Blade Show.

If the applicant has satisfactorily completed the "INTRODUCTION TO BLADESMITHING" course at an approved ABS Bladesmithing School, the applicant may take the performance test with a Master Smith, following membership in the ABS after one (1) year. The applicant may stand to have his knives juried for the Journeyman Smith rating at the Annual Show and Meeting after a minimum of two (2) years membership in the ABS.

Note:

The criteria of a minimum three (3) years of membership in the ABS, or two (2) years if the "INTRODUCTION TO BLADESMITHING" course has been successfully completed, is intended to ensure a minimum level of experience with the forged blade as well as a commitment to the heritage of the craft. While there may be other ways in which an individual can demonstrate such experience and commitment, this standard was adopted as an equitable and verifiable criterion within the ABS. These ABS standards are not intended to demean or diminish the skills or knowledge of others who have not chosen to embrace or attempt to meet the ABS requirements set forth in these procedures.

Conditions for Performance Test:

The test must be observed and administered by an ABS Master Smith.

The applicant must make prior arrangements with the Master Smith whom he/she selected to supervise the performance test.

The test may be conducted at the shop of the Master Smith or at any official ABS function where the facilities lend themselves to the safe and responsible conduct of the testing procedure (hammer-ins, etc.). Exceptional circumstances may occasionally exist wherein this is not possible. Exceptions to this rule may be granted by the Chairman of the American Bladesmith Society; however, this approval may only be granted by after conferring with the testing Master Smith **prior to** the proposed test date.

Either the supervising Master Smith or the applicant may request that one or more witnesses be present during any or all testing procedures. This condition must meet with the approval of the Master Smith supervising the performance test.

Blades or any component of a completed knife **made in any instructional class** will not be eligible to be used for performance tests or presented to the ABS Judging Panel for fit and finish examination for the rating of Journeyman Smith or Mastersmith.

Reasonable and appropriate safety precautions must be followed. The applicant assumes responsibility for any injury incurred while performing the test.

The applicant is further responsible for providing all safety equipment such as, but not limited to; safety glasses, a heavy shop apron, leather gloves, etc.

The applicant must have personally forged and performed all work on the test blade, with no other person physically assisting in its construction or heat-treating.

Only forged blades may be tested. Applicants for Journeyman Smith must test with a **carbon steel** knife. **Damascus or laminated blades are not allowed as test blades for those seeking the Journeyman Smith rating.**

Once the test begins, no work, not even light stropping, may be done to the test blade.

The applicant alone must conduct the test of the blade's performance under the supervision of the Master Smith. No other person is to conduct any portion of the test, including the supervising Master Smith, except for the rope-cutting test as specifically provided in the rope cutting procedure. A special exception may be obtained for an applicant who has a disability that requires accommodation in order to perform the test. Such exception must have prior written approval from the Chairman of the ABS.

Test Knife Specifications:

Overall Length of Knife: Maximum fifteen (15) inches.

Blade Width: Maximum two (2) inches.

Blade Length: Maximum ten (10) inches from point to the beginning of either the guard, bolster, or handle of the blade.

Handle Configuration: Any handle configuration is acceptable with or without guard, bolsters, ferrule, etc.

Handle Material is irrelevant and solely the choice of the applicant.

Blade Material: The Journeyman Smith may test with any forged homogenous carbon steel of his or her choice. **No Damascus steel (pattern-welded) or other forge-welded material (welded cable, etc.) will be allowed for this test.**

Supplemental Test:

The applicant may be required at the Master Smith's discretion:

- a. To forge a non-Damascus blade of any style.

b. To pass a verbal quiz.

Testing:

The applicant must supply materials needed for the performance test:

- The ABS Performance Test Certification Form.
- All safety equipment including safety glasses, heavy shop apron, gloves, etc.
- A sufficient length of one (1) inch minimum diameter sisal or manila rope.
- A four (4) foot or longer length of 2x4 construction grade pine wood stud of the applicant's choice.
- The applicant's test knife. No special handle or finish is required. This is a test of performance, and the test knife will ultimately be destroyed during the testing process.
- While not a part of the formal test, the applicant is encouraged to bring several finished knives for the Master Smith to inspect for quality of workmanship, fit, finish, design, etc. The feedback from the Master Smith is intended to help the applicant better evaluate if the quality of his/her work (design, detail, finish, etc.) is likely to meet the criteria of the ABS Judging Panel at the annual show.

The Performance Test must be conducted in the following sequence:

NOTE: ALL TESTS MUST BE PERFORMED BY THE APPLICANT, EXCEPT AS SPECIFICALLY PROVIDED FOR IN THE ROPE CUTTING. THE MASTER SMITH IS TO SUPERVISE AND SERVE AS THE OFFICIAL ABS WITNESS.

1. ROPE CUTTING: THE PURPOSE OF THIS TEST IS TO TEST THE EDGE GEOMETRY AND SHARPNESS.

The applicant is responsible for supplying the test rope and ensuring that it is a minimum of one (1) inch in diameter. If the applicant brings a larger rope, the applicant will be judged using the same criteria as though the rope was one (1) inch in diameter. The rope is to be hung in a safe manner, so that the end of the rope to be cut hangs loose without touching the floor or any other object. As a safety precaution, the rope is not to be hand held by another person during the rope-cutting test. The hanging end of the rope is to be marked with tape or a marker to clearly indicate the area that is to be cut. The cut must be approximately six (6) inches from the end of the free hanging rope. A minimum of one (1) cut must be made. The applicant is to aim at the mark with a two (2) inch margin of high or low being acceptable. The applicant must sever the rope in two with one stroke. If the applicant fails on the first attempt, the Master Smith will allow two more attempts. However, if the Master Smith believes that the failure to sever the rope is due to the lack of skill or strength of the applicant, the Master Smith may attempt the rope cutting with the test knife. This is a test of the applicant's ability to make a knife, not to cut with it. If neither the applicant nor the Master Smith successfully cuts the rope, the applicant fails.

2. WOOD CHOPPING: THE PURPOSE OF THIS TEST IS TO DEMONSTRATE EDGE TOUGHNESS.

The chopping test is to be conducted with 2x4 construction grade pine wood stud. The 2x4 may be either hand held or clamped into a vise or other safe device. A chopping motion (no whittling) is to be used. The 2x4 must be chopped completely through a minimum of two (2) times. The applicant may choose the area of the 2x4 through which to chop. Following the chopping test, the Master Smith will inspect the edge to determine if there is any noticeable

damage to the blade. Any nicks, chips, flat spots, rolled edges, or other deformations of the blade will result in failing the test.

3. SHAVING HAIR: THE PURPOSE OF THIS TEST IS TO DEMONSTRATE EDGE RETENTION.

After the Master Smith approves the quality of the edge, the blade will be returned to the applicant. The applicant must then shave hair using the section of the blade that was most frequently used in the cutting and chopping portions of the test. Enough hair must be shaved to demonstrate that the edge remains keen and shaving sharp.

4. BENDING: THE PURPOSE OF THIS TEST IS TO SHOW THAT THE APPLICANT IS ABLE TO HEAT TREAT A KNIFE WITH A SOFT BACK AND A HARD EDGE.

The bending of the blade is the final test. Safety gear should be worn. At the discretion of the applicant or the Master Smith, the edge may be dulled prior to bending. The Master Smith will mark a line across the width of the blade approximately three (3) inches from the tip of the blade. The blade will then be inserted into a vise, tip first, such that the blade is placed into the vise up to the mark on the blade. If the vise jaws are rough, smooth metal or wooden inserts may be located on each side of the clamped portion of the blade to protect the blade, when bending the test knife. The blade shall be bent by force applied to the handle. A leverage device, such as a pipe may be used as long as it does not pose a safety risk. The use of such a device is at the sole risk of the applicant and at the discretion of the supervising Master Smith. The applicant will then bend the blade ninety (90) degrees. The supervising Master Smith will signal the applicant when the ninety (90) degree angle has been reached. The blade is allowed to crack at the edge on bending but not beyond approximately **one third (1/3rd) the width of the blade** leaving two thirds (2/3rds) of the blade intact. However, if any part of the blade chips or any part of the blade or tang breaks off, the applicant fails. Because of the many variables in the size, geometry, and temper line of the blade, the Master Smith using his/her judgment, shall determine if the extent or location of the fracture line is acceptable. The decision of the Master Smith is final.

Following The Completion of the Performance Test:

After satisfactorily passing the Performance test, the supervising Master Smith will sign and date the applicant's ABS Performance Test Certification Form.

Show Requirements:

The applicant is responsible for presenting the original signed ABS Performance Test Certification Form and the test blade in person at the ABS Annual Show and Meeting. No modification of any sort is to be made to the test blade following the completion of the test. The applicant must submit a minimum of five (5) completed forged knives for judging by the ABS Judging Panel. The knives to be judged must be made of **plain carbon steel (no Damascus or other forge-welded material)** and may **not** include folding knives among the five (5) completed knives. Swords, axes, hatchets, war hammers, and tomahawks or any other pieces other than knives are not permitted.

The knives submitted for judging must be the sole work of the applicant. Sheaths are not required or advisable on the judging table.

The applicant is advised to submit only completed knives that show the applicant's best work, as all knives submitted will be judged and the failure of any one knife may cause the applicant to fail this portion of the test. The applicant should also carefully study the Judging Guidelines.

Time Limits:

If the applicant does not pass the performance test, he or she may not present knives for judging at the ABS Annual Show and Meeting. The applicant is not permitted to retake the performance test until six (6) months have elapsed from the date of the failed performance test. An applicant has three (3) years from the date of the performance test to present his or her test blade, Performance Test Certification Form, and five (5) completed knives at the ABS Annual Show and Meeting for judging by the ABS Judging Panel. If the applicant does not complete both phases of the test within a three (3) year time period, the applicant must reapply and complete the performance testing process again. The Master Smith is responsible for notifying the ABS of the Pass or Fail Status of the performance test. The Master Smith is encouraged to assist the applicant who has failed the performance test to gain the necessary skills or knowledge needed to satisfactorily meet the performance test criteria on his or her next testing. After six (6) months, the applicant may retest with the same Master Smith or any other Master Smith chosen by the applicant.

The Journeyman Smith applicant may present knives to the ABS Judging in an effort to achieve the rating of Journeyman a total of three times before being ruled ineligible for further testing. Only three attempts may be made; however, the ABS Chairman may, at his discretion permit the applicant to make one additional attempt under one of two conditions: (1) if the applicant presents proof of graduation from an ABS Introduction to Bladesmithing course after the date of the third failure or (2) if the applicant presents sufficient proof that he/she has sought out and received substantial additional training under the tutelage of a current ABS Master Smith since his/her third failure. This permission, if granted, will only guarantee the applicant an opportunity to undergo judging of his or her knives, provided that all other requirements are met. It is in no way a guarantee that this opportunity will result in the applicant achieving a passing grade from the judges.

Annual Show Disclaimer:

The ABS does not have control over where or when the ABS Annual Show and Meeting will be held. Because dates may vary, some applicants may be inconvenienced and find on occasion that they must wait longer than the expected duration before being eligible to stand for judging as an ABS Journeyman Smith.

Greg Neely, Chairman
Board of Directors
American Bladesmith Society, Inc.
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