



MASTER BLADESMITH APPLICANT

ABS Master Smith Judging for Quality of Finished Knives

I. ELIGIBILITY

- A. Upon successful completion of the performance test, the Master Smith applicant has completed the first step in applying for a Master Smith rating and is now eligible to submit five (5) knives to be judged by an official ABS judging panel to be assessed for standards in finished knives.
- B. An applicant must be a member in good standing with the ABS, with all dues currently paid in full, to submit for Master Smith testing and judging.
- C. An applicant is not eligible to apply for Master Smith judging and rating, before a recognized judging panel, until he/she has held a Journeyman Bladesmith membership in the ABS for two (2) continuous, and uninterrupted, years from the date of receiving their Journeyman certification from the ABS.
- D. If the applicant does not pass the performance test, he/she may not present knives for judging by an official ABS panel until they pass the performance test. 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 for judging by an official 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.
- E. A copy of the Performance Test Certification Form must be on file with the ABS office before you can be proven eligible to present knives for judging. The applicant should retain possession of the original signed form for presentation at judging, while providing a photocopy or electronic image to the ABS office.

II. CONDITIONS FOR JUDGING

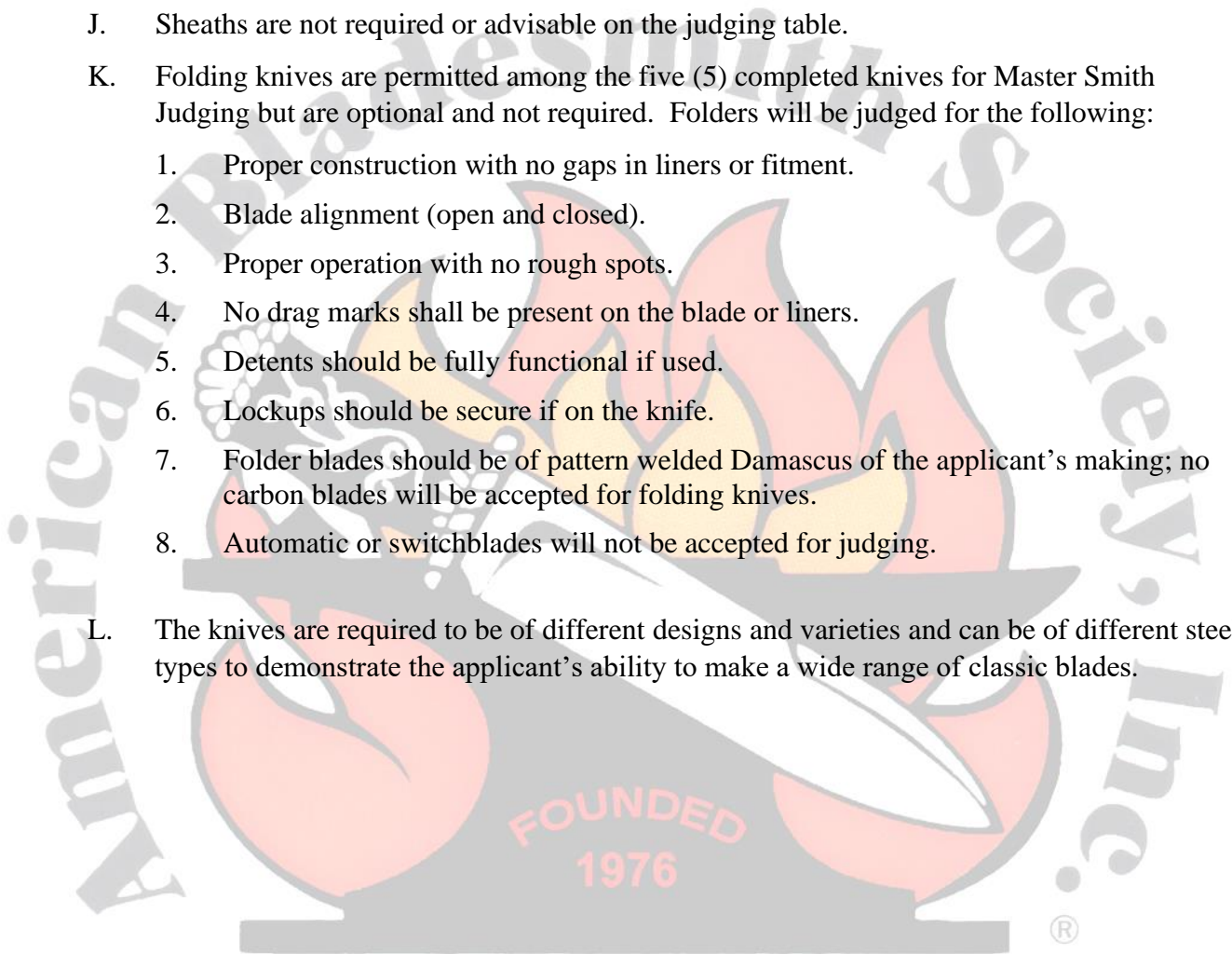
- A. The applicant is responsible for presenting, in person, to an approved ABS judging panel:
 - 1. The original signed ABS Performance Test Certification Form
 - 2. The unmodified performance test blade. No modification of any sort is to be made to the bent performance test blade following the completion of the test. Any test blade which has been straightened or otherwise altered shall be disqualified.
 - 3. A minimum of five (5) completed forged knives of different styles, with one meeting the ABS requirement of a traditional pattern welded Damascus European Quillon dagger with at least three hundred (300) or more forge welded layers.

Judging Panel Availability Disclaimer: The ABS does not have control over all circumstances as to where or when an official ABS judging panel may convene. 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 Master Bladesmith.

III. SPECIFICATIONS OF KNIVES TO BE JUDGED

- A. 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. A completed knife includes a sharpened edge capable of cutting; an unsharpened blade is considered incomplete and may result in failure.
- B. All aspects of the knives, including heat treatment and any embellishments, or enhancements, such as file work, engraving, and/or metal coloration, must be the sole work of the applicant.
- C. Blades, or any component of a 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 or Master Bladesmith.
- D. A minimum of two knives among the five submitted must have at least 6-inch (15.24 cm) blades.
- E. All knives must be fully sharpened.

- F. All of the knives submitted must have guards or bolsters.
- G. No more than two (2) knives among the five (5) submitted may be of integral design forged from round bar stock.
- H. Primitive finishes, such as forge finishes, or coarse grinder finishes are not permitted on knives to be submitted for judging.
- I. Swords, axes, hatchets, war hammers, and tomahawks or any other pieces other than knives are not permitted for judging.
- J. Sheaths are not required or advisable on the judging table.
- K. Folding knives are permitted among the five (5) completed knives for Master Smith Judging but are optional and not required. Folders will be judged for the following:
 - 1. Proper construction with no gaps in liners or fitment.
 - 2. Blade alignment (open and closed).
 - 3. Proper operation with no rough spots.
 - 4. No drag marks shall be present on the blade or liners.
 - 5. Detents should be fully functional if used.
 - 6. Lockups should be secure if on the knife.
 - 7. Folder blades should be of pattern welded Damascus of the applicant's making; no carbon blades will be accepted for folding knives.
 - 8. Automatic or switchblades will not be accepted for judging.
- L. The knives are required to be of different designs and varieties and can be of different steel types to demonstrate the applicant's ability to make a wide range of classic blades.



M. **Specifications for the Master Dagger.** Among the five (5) knives to be judged, one must be a European style quillon dagger with the following specifications:

1. Blade specifications:

- a) Blade length must be a minimum of ten (10) inches (25.40 cm) from guard to tip.
- b) The blade must be of at least 300 pattern welded layers with an intentional pattern, random pattern is not acceptable. Twists, ladder patterns and mosaic patterns are all encouraged, but be sure that there is at least one section visible which the judges can ascertain that the blade meets the 300-layer minimum. The blade is the only portion of the dagger, which is required to be made of Damascus steel, though Damascus is certainly permitted in the hardware of the handle.
- c) The blade must be ground in either a double flat grind (diamond cross-section) or double hollow-ground and must be straight, symmetrical, and contain no flaws or cold shuts.

2. Guard Specifications:

- a) The guard must be a quillon type guard similar to those found on European daggers of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. Such a guard extends outward from the center of the dagger and must be even and symmetrical.
- b) The guard must incorporate quillons; flat guards and oval guards do not qualify.
- c) Quillons may be forged or turned but must be traditional to this style of dagger.

3. Handle specifications:

- a) Handle length should be appropriate for the blade and should be made of the very best materials the applicant can afford.
- b) The handle should have a minimum of four (4) twisted wires inlaid to a depth of half of the twisted wires diameter, with flutes in the handle between the twisted wire for most of its length.
- c) The strands of wire must show the same degree of twist for all.
- d) The wire is not to be glued to the handle and must stay firmly in place, though the hidden ends of the wire can be anchored in any appropriate manner.
- e) Flutes should be crisp, distinct and well finished.
- f) The spacing and depth for wires and flutes must also be even and uniform.
- g) The rules currently do not specify that the wire and flutes must be spiraled around the handle and wire/flutes running parallel with the handle are acceptable.

IV. JUDGING PROCEDURE

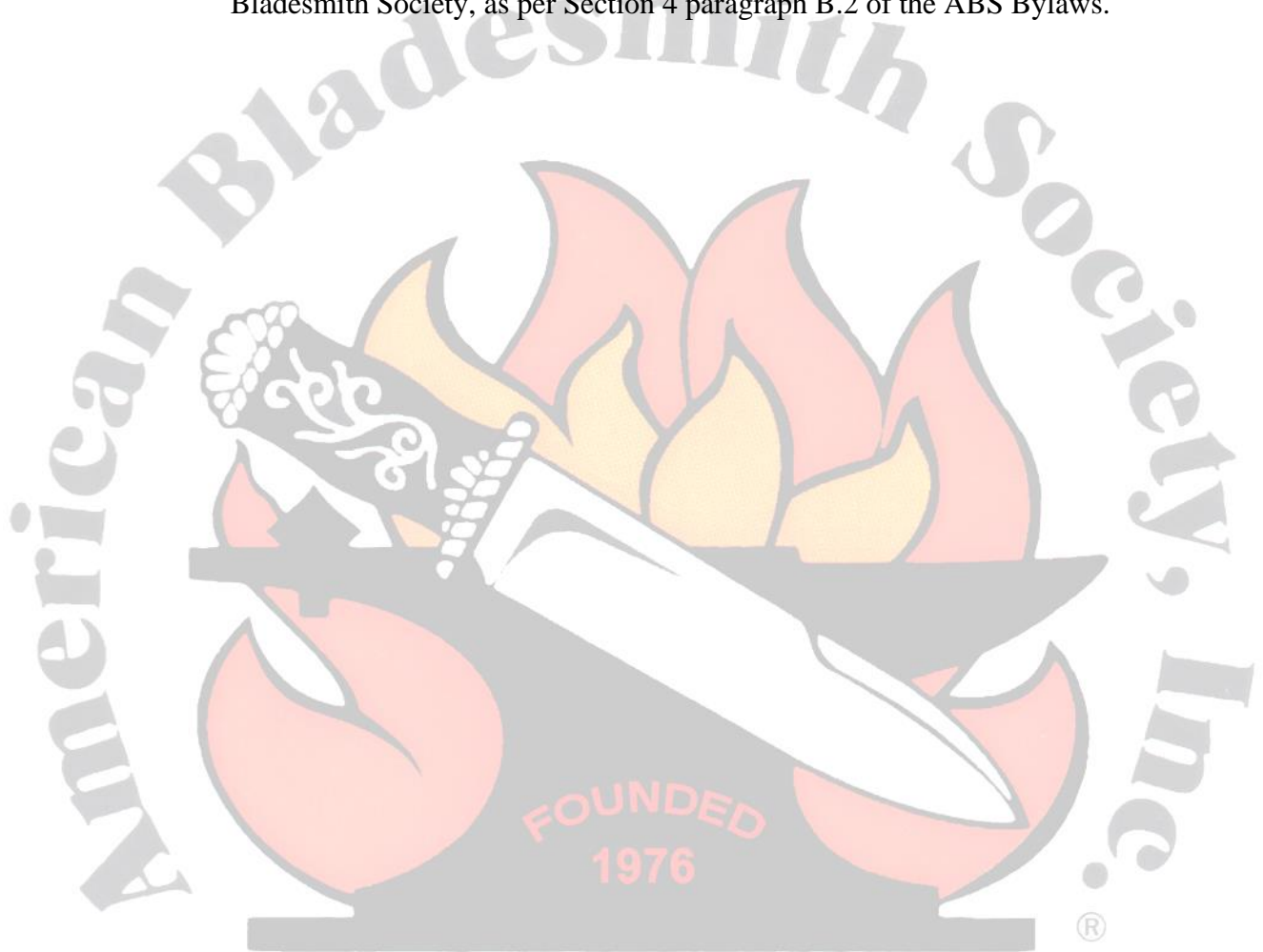
- A. The Master Smith applicant must notify the ABS Office at least thirty (30) days in advance of the date of the judging to be added to the list of applicants to be judged.
- B. All knives to be judged must be in place in the judging room before the scheduled time that the judging room doors will close.
- C. It is necessary for the safety and security of the knives being judged, and for judging to proceed in a timely manner, that only the applicant enter to place their knives in the judging room.
- D. Applicants are not permitted to touch any knives but their own within the judging area.
- E. Only personnel authorized by the presiding head judge of the active ABS judging panel will be permitted in the judging room after the doors close for judging to begin.
- F. It is required that applicants remain in the immediate area outside the judging room while their knives are being judged.
- G. The Master Smith applicant's knives will be judged and receive a paper "pass" or "fail" vote from each member of the authorized panel of judges, with added notes on any deficiencies to be addressed
- H. When all judging is complete the pass/fail votes of the judges will be tallied and the applicants will be called into the judging room to be notified of the results. Applicants will retrieve their knives and leave the judging room promptly following their review with the judges.
- I. **All decisions of the judging panel are final** and the applicant agrees to this by presenting their knives to be judged.

V. PROCEDURES FOLLOWING JUDGING OF FINISHED KNIVES

- A. Procedure if the applicant is failed by the judging panel:
 - 1. Working within time constraints, the judges present will do their best to advise unsuccessful applicants on how to improve chances of a passing a future judging.
 - 2. The applicant is allowed a maximum of three (3) opportunities to present his/her work to the ABS Judging Panel in an effort to secure a rating of Master Smith. Though these attempts need not necessarily be made in consecutive years, no further applications are accepted after a third failure.

B. Procedure if the applicant receives a passing grade by the judging panel:

1. An applicant who successfully passes the judging may still receive advice on how to improve in pursuit of the ABS goal of bladesmithing excellence.
2. At a time determined most convenient by the ABS, the applicant will be issued a Master Bladesmith certificate and the coveted M.S. stamp, recognizing them as a Master Bladesmith member of the American Bladesmith Society.
3. It should be noted that the Master Smith stamp is the property of the ABS and the ABS can request it be returned if the holder is no longer a member of the American Bladesmith Society, as per Section 4 paragraph B.2 of the ABS Bylaws.



History of Revisions to ABS JS and MS Testing Rules

ABS Journeyman Performance Test, III. Test Knife Specifications, B., 2. In order to adhere to blade length requirements, integral knives forged from round bar stock are not to be used for performance test blades.

ABS Master Smith Performance Test, III. Test Knife Specifications, B., 2. In order to adhere to blade length requirements, integral knives forged from round bar stock are not to be used for performance test blades.

ABS Journeyman Judging for Quality of Finished Knives, III. Specifications of Knives to Be Judged, G. No more than two (2) knives among the five (5) submitted may be of integral design forged from round bar stock.

ABS Master Smith Judging for Quality of Finished Knives, III. Specifications of Knives to Be Judged, G. No more than two (2) knives among the five (5) submitted may be of integral design forged from round bar stock.

-ABS Board of Directors, Steve Dunn, Chairman, June, 1, 2023

ABS Journeyman Judging for Quality of Finished Knives, V. Procedures Following Judging of Finished Knives, A. Procedure if the applicant is failed by the judging panel. 2. "The Journeyman Smith applicant may present knives to the ABS Judging in an effort to achieve the rating of Journeyman Smith 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. A fourth failure is final, and no further attempts will be allowed. - **ABS Master Smith Judging for Quality of Finished Knives, III, Specifications of Knives to Be Judged, J. Folding Knives Rules - added.** ABS Board of Directors, Steve Dunn, Chairman, November 4, 2019

ABS Journeyman Judging for Quality of Finished Knives, I. Eligibility, E. Update of the Performance Test Certification forms for both MS and JS, to a two-page form. A copy of the Performance Test Certification Form must be on file with the ABS office before you can be proven eligible to present knives for judging.

ABS Journeyman Judging for Quality of Finished Knives, III. Specifications of Knives to Be Judged, C. Blades, or any component of a 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 or Master Bladesmith. **-ABS Board of Directors, Harvey Dean, Chairman, December 8, 2015**

ABS Journeyman Judging for Quality of Finished Knives, III. Specifications of Knives to Be Judged, D. A minimum of two (2) knives among the five (5) submitted must have at least 6-inch (15.24 cm) blades. **ABS Journeyman Judging for Quality of Finished Knives, III. Specifications of Knives to Be Judged, F.** All of the knives submitted must have guards or bolsters. **-ABS Board of Directors, August 28, 2012**

ABS Master Smith Judging for Quality of Finished Knives, III, Specifications of Knives to Be Judged, M. Specifications for the Master Dagger, I. Blade Specifications, b.: "...with an intentional pattern, random pattern is not acceptable." - **ABS Board of Directors, June 2009.**