

Advanced Training Session
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
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Advanced Training Session
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. What is the purpose of the Advanced Training Session (ATS)?

A: The purpose of the ATS is two-fold. It provides:

- a. the Certified Referee conducting the on-court session (hereafter called the Trainer) and Regional Certified Referee Coordinator (CRC) an opportunity to train, coach and give feedback to the Level 2 Trainee (hereafter referred to as Referee) on their strengths and weaknesses;
- b. the Referee an opportunity to receive personalized training and demonstrate on-court skills and knowledge in a training environment. In that vein, the ATS should be considered a formal training session to refine the Referee's skills and increase the likelihood the Referee will successfully pass a Certification Evaluation. It is not, however, a pseudo certification evaluation with its own points, deductions, or objective pass/fail criteria.

Note: The CRC must decide whether the Referee is qualified and ready to become certified. The result of the ATS plays a key part in the CRC's decision to recommend the Referee submit an application to be evaluated as a Certified Referee.

2. Are there different parts to the ATS?

A: Yes; there are two parts to the ATS:

- a. an on-court training session to refine skills, knowledge and experience;
- b. An interview, typically by phone, with the Regional CRC to determine the Referee's depth of knowledge of the Rulebook, the best practices according to the Referee Handbook, and various court scenarios.

3. Who conducts the two parts of the ATS?

A: A Certified Referee other than the Referee's mentor should normally conduct the on-court portion of the ATS, but there is no restriction preventing the mentor from conducting the ATS. The reason is because we have already seen examples where the mentor – Referee relationship has suffered because the mentor has determined that the Referee was not ready for an evaluation.

Special circumstances, such as travel distances or a lack of Certified Referees near the Referee's location may prevent a different Trainer from conducting the on-court session. In those cases, the mentor or the CRC may be the only

option for conducting the on-court session. **The CRC is the decision-making authority on who is best suited to conduct the on-court session, except as permitted in question 4 below.**

The CRC, however, is the only person who can perform the interview.

4. Can the Referee obtain the ATS outside the Referee's normal USAPA Region; i.e., from a Certified Referee in a different region?

A: Yes, but three conditions must be met:

- a. The Referee must arrange this; it's unreasonable to expect the Referee's mentor or 'home' CRC to arrange this alternate location ATS. The 'home' CRC is the CRC who assigned a mentor to the Referee.
- b. The Certified Referee Trainer must, obviously, agree to conduct the ATS.
- c. The 'home' CRC must be notified by the Referee that the Referee intends to obtain an ATS in a different region.

In these circumstances, however, the 'home' CRC must conduct the interview part of the ATS, and retains responsibility for deciding when and if the Referee can submit an application to be evaluated.

5. Do the two parts of the ATS have to be done in any particular order?

A: No, but the on-court session is usually done first. There are circumstances where the CRC may elect to conduct the interview first. This is most likely to occur when the CRC is the mentor.

Note: The Trainer makes a recommendation to the CRC after the on-court session is complete. The CRC is responsible for determining if the Referee's skill and knowledge levels are sufficient enough for the CRC to recommend the Referee make a formal application to be evaluated. How the different Regional CRCs get comfortable with this decision is up to them.

6. Can the mentor or CRC waive the need for an on-court session?

A: Only the CRC can initiate a waiver. Sometimes the CRC has personally observed the Referee enough to determine that conducting an on-court session would not appreciably enhance the Referee's level of proficiency nor the ability of the CRC to make an informed decision on recommending the Referee for Certification evaluation. In those rare circumstances, which can occur when the CRC is also the mentor, the CRC may waive the on-court part of the ATS.

7. Can the on-court session take place during a live (actual) tournament, sanctioned or otherwise?

No. A live tournament does not allow the introduction of controlled simulated faults and violations, thereby defeating the purpose of the ATS. See question 11.

8. Who arranges the on-court session?

A: Normally the Referee makes these arrangements, working with the availability of the Trainer and the required team of players (see question 9). The Referee is responsible for paying any court rental fees. Supplies such as scoresheets, clipboards, video camera, balls, first server bands, stopwatches, etc. can be a point of discussion between the Referee and the Trainer. See Question 18 regarding optional video recording.

9. Where do the players come from for the on-court session?

A: Experience has shown that it is best if the Trainer chooses the players. The objective is to find players within the same skill level and preferably players the Referee does not know well. Because there is some improvisation involved, some Trainers have been successful in developing a small group of individuals who perform the on-court sessions very well and do not need to be taught what to do each time they volunteer to help.

10. How many players are needed for the on-court session?

A: Ideally, eight players, but as few as five can work. With eight, four are players and four are line judges for that portion of the on-court session. With six, four are players and two are line judges, positioned on opposite corners. And, with five, one line judge can fulfill the objectives needed to determine how well the Referee knows how to work with line judges. The Trainer may also play the role of a line judge for the purpose giving the Referee experience working with line judges. See Question 14 for comments on line judges.

Note: To become a Level 1 Referee, a minimum of one game as a line judge is required. To become a Level 2 Referee, a minimum of two games as a line judge is required. These requirements are listed on the TRR/ATS form. The line judge requirement can be met by fulfilling the line judge role during another Referee's ATS.

11. What happens during the on-court session?

A: Evenly matched teams play actual games, **but players do so with the understanding winning is not the objective.** Prior to the beginning of the ATS, the Trainer provides written and/or verbal descriptions of specific faults/violations for each of the players, line judges, and spectators (should there be any). Scenarios are discussed with the group how they might subtly insert the assigned faults/violations with the cooperation of one another. The on-court session is designed to be realistic to tournament play, to be professional and respectful of the importance of this as the Referee's training session. It is extremely important that players allow enough time between violations for realistic flow of the game.

12. What guidance should the Trainer provide the players?

A: There is no denying the fact that the Trainer must plan for a successful ATS. A big part of that pre-planning is to control the insertion of the faults carefully to make sure the faults don't occur near each other. The intent is to provide a realistic game, not a series of gotcha's, which may be fun for the players but which can be not only unrealistic for the Referee, but overwhelming, thereby defeating the objective of the training. The specific faults and violations can be provided to the players on 3x5 cards, small laundry tags, pieces of paper, or other suitable methods.

The guidance below is an outline of what should be provided to the players to help provide a measure of consistency among ATSs and ensure the players don't overwhelm the Referee:

- a. There should be little to NO conversation among the players except normal player communication typical during play.
- b. Longer rallies are preferred. Unplanned errors may occur without even trying.
- c. Cooperative play between teams is necessary in an effort to set up scenarios. Both teams should be aware of the errors they are attempting to insert during play.
- d. Have each team take one timeout to lend opportunity for the Referee to practice and demonstrate the required timeout procedure.
- e. Players should appeal an occasional CLOSE line call.
- f. After a long rally and/or retrieving a ball that is hit far away, the player should ask the Referee if the player is the correct server (regardless of whether the player is or not) to test the Referee's ability to track players.
- g. Be sure to allow enough time between violations so there is flow to the game.

13. What kind of faults/violations should be inserted during the ATS?

A: Here is a list of typical intentional faults that can easily be inserted in the games played. **This list is not all-inclusive and in no way is provided with any suggestion that all of these must be inserted for each ATS.** These are just examples. The Trainer is tasked with the responsibility to pick faults/violations that will test the Referee's ability to handle typical court situations. Realize that some faults may occur naturally, so it's important for the Trainer to manage the number and frequency of faults and violations inserted to make sure the on-court session is realistic. Because there will normally be some unplanned faults or violations that occur, **the total number of planned faults and violations should not exceed 10.**

- a. A non-volley zone foot fault
- b. A server foot fault
- c. The receiver calls time-out after the score is called
- d. A team fails to make a line call on an obvious 'out' ball
- e. A receiver stops play and says the wrong score was called
- f. A player stops to tie a shoe
- g. The incorrect server serves*
- h. The incorrect receiver returns a serve*
- i. The server takes over 10 seconds to serve the ball
- j. A service motion begins too early
- k. A receiver raises a paddle to delay the serve after the Referee begins to call the score
- l. A player appeals an out call
- m. A player passes the plane of the net without legally striking the ball
- n. A player distracts a hitter
- o. An incorrect server tosses the ball to a partner, requiring the receivers to reset
- p. A player who hits a ball claims a line judge's "out" call is incorrect
- q. A receiver calls "short serve" and the receiver catches the ball
- r. A player asks for a medical time-out

* At least one of each should be inserted.

14. How many games are played to optimize the training benefit of the ATS for the Referee?

A: Normally two. Before starting the first game of the formal session, however, the Referee should be given an opportunity to get into a rhythm, work on cadence, etc., without the Trainer taking any notes or the players inserting any planned faults or violations. The players should accommodate this, if requested by the Referee, but it should not take more than six points.

Thereafter the formal session should start, with the normal player briefing. There are normally two games, both 2 out of 3 to 11 points. This will allow the Trainer to observe a change of game procedure in between the two games (see #22 on the TRR/ATS form). The second game, however, should simulate game 3 of a gold medal match with line judges. This will allow the Trainer the opportunity to observe a line judge briefing (#3 on the TRR/ATS form) and an opportunity to observe how the Referee conducts end-change procedures (#23 on the TRR/ATS form).

Additional games or points are at the discretion of the Trainer. In some cases, the Trainer will want to see, for example, if additional faults or violations are needed to solidify the training impact of a specific skill, for example, the ability to find an out-of-position player. But additional games should be unusual.

Note: Some tournaments do not use line judges, so it is not unusual for Referees to get to this point in their development never having refereed a match with line judges. The on-court training session may be where this experience/training occurs for the first time. A requirement of the certification evaluation is to referee a gold medal match with line judges. We would be doing referees a disservice if they were recommended to apply for evaluation without having worked with line judges at least once.

15. Should the Trainer keep score during the ATS?

A: It's optional. Some Trainers find it helpful to do so in determining if the Referee has the correct score when, for example, an incorrect server or receiver fault is inserted. Some Trainers also make marks on the scoresheet as a reminder to indicate at what point in the match they expect the players to insert certain faults or violations.

16. Does the Trainer have to keep notes during the on-court session?

A: Trainers can use whatever method they are most comfortable with to provide feedback to the Referee at the completion of the session (see question 20). Note taking is optional, but recommended. The TRR/ATS form may prove helpful for this purpose, but the Trainer may use other methods that help facilitate the feedback to the Referee. The bottom of TRR/ATS form is, however, where the overall results of the ATS are recorded.

17. Are the games played with or without interruption if the Referee misses a fault or violation?

A: That depends. Although there are several people involved in the on-court portion of the ATS, it is designed to be a training session and therefore only the Trainer should be communicating with the Referee. The Trainer is the

only person allowed to stop play to provide feedback to the Referee during the on-court session. To that end, the Trainer has to decide how to best maximize the training benefit of the session.

If there are clear weaknesses in the referee's skill set, the Trainer can step in to reset the play situation or even end the session early if it is clear that no more play is likely to be beneficial to the referee until more classroom training or supervised practice (mentoring) has occurred. More specifically, the Trainer might stop play after a point is over, for example, for a missed out-of-position receiver. The Referee, however, should be given time to catch the mistake before the next serve occurs. Another example might be if the Referee errantly answers a player's question such as "Am I the correct server?"

There is little value, however, in stopping play if the Referee calls the incorrect score or forgets to make a side-out mark. The Trainer should make a note of those and critique those afterwards. Key mistakes, however, (out of position players, foot faults) should be critiqued when they happen to make sure the Referee can acknowledge what the Referee missed in real time.

18. May the on-court session be videotaped?

A: It is not required, but some Trainers have found it beneficial should the Referee have questions about items that took place during the ATS but were not critiqued immediately at the time they happened. Video can be a useful tool for both the Trainer and the Referee. It can be reviewed and used for learning purposes and can also serve to resolve differences should there be a disagreement as to what actually took place during the ATS. Therefore, Referees should know and agree with the video use in advance of the ATS start. There is no requirement or suggestion of a requirement intended; it is entirely up to the Trainer (or the Referee) if either wants to avail themselves of videotaping. Videotaping should be more strongly considered for the benefit of the 'home' CRC, however, if the situation described in Question 4 occurs.

19. How does the Trainer determine if the Referee has demonstrated enough proficiency for recommendation to move forward with the second portion of the ATS, the interview with the CRC ?

A: It is purposely subjective. The on-court session of the ATS is designed to replicate game-like situations for the training benefit of the Referee. Accordingly, there is no success/failure criteria for an ATS. For the Trainer, it comes down to this: Do you want your name attached to this person if they move on to the CRC interview and apply for certification?

Do the Referees have to be perfect? No. What if they miss one out of position player? In an evaluation, that is a failure. In an ATS, that isn't an automatic reason to keep the Trainer from recommending the person be evaluated, especially if the Referee catches two or three other players out of position. If Referees leave the ATS knowing they have a weakness of concentration and that is contributing to not finding an out of position player, then that is something they can work on in the interim between the ATS and the evaluation. That is the true benefit of the ATS; to find those weaknesses so they can be corrected. If, however, they leave the ATS without fully understanding the odd/even convention, then that is a fundamental weakness that needs more work. Trainers probably should not, in that case, recommend that person be evaluated until the Referee can demonstrate that the referee has corrected that weakness. Fundamental rule knowledge weaknesses are another area that can hold back otherwise competent Referees.

The Tiered Referee Rating (TRR/ATS) form is an excellent reference that outlines a number of required skills the Referee should demonstrate during the on-court session. Again, the Referee does not need to be perfect, but the Trainer should keep in mind two things:

- a. If the Referee is recommended for certification evaluation and is not successful, it is a tremendous disappointment to the Referee. It does little good to recommend someone be evaluated if the Trainer and/or the CRC are not confident in the Referee's abilities.
- b. Evaluators often travel long distances and can incur personal out-of-pocket expenses to conduct evaluations for the USAPA, so the Trainer and CRC should be respectful of the evaluator's time by only recommending those who have demonstrated an acceptable degree of skill mastery.

20. How should the Trainer conduct the feedback session at the end of the on-court session?

A: How the feedback is provided is oftentimes more important than the feedback itself. Many people are not accustomed to hearing someone else critique their performance. With that in mind, it's important for the Trainer to provide the performance feedback in a manner that will be appreciated and delivered in a thoughtful and helpful way.

Here is a simple model Trainers can use to provide the feedback in a non-critical manner. It's not a requirement to use this, but it has proven to be a simple four-step method to help give constructive feedback.

Use the mnemonic **D I N K** to guide the feedback session:

D: The **D** stands for **Differently**. Ask the Referee, “If you had to do the ATS all over again, what would you do **DIFFERENTLY**? Why ask this? It allows the Referee to self-critique, so it is non-threatening. If the Referee already knows what mistakes the Referee made or what improvements are needed, then there is no reason for the Trainer to say much more.

I: The **I** stands for **Ideal**. Say to the Referee, “Here’s what **I** think you did that was **IDEAL**; and should continue doing.” Then list all the things the Referee did that were performed particularly well. Why do we do this? Again, this is non-threatening and it’s important for Referees to know what you think they did well so they will continue to do it. So, the first two parts of the **D I N K** mnemonic reminder are non-judgmental.

N: The **N** stands for **Never**, as in ‘**Never** do these things again’. That is too strong of a statement, so don’t actually say that, but the **N** here is a reminder to the Trainer that **Now** is the time for the Trainer to provide the items that the Referees should improve upon, what they **Need** to do better. It’s as simple as saying something similar to, “Here are the items from the ATS that **Need** your attention to make you an even more effective referee.” Then go through your list.

K: The **K** stands for **Key** take-a-ways or **Key Knowledge**. This is where and when the Trainer turns the discussion back over to the Referee and asks the Referee, “Based on what we have talked about here, what is your **Key Knowledge**, or take-a-ways you want to work on?” Then listen carefully to make sure the Referee’s list of improvement items matches yours.

Following the above, the Trainer should tell the Referee if they are recommended to move on to the CRC for the interview part of the ATS.

21. To become a Level 2 Referee, all marks must be in the Level 2 column. Why doesn’t the same requirement hold true for the ATS; i.e., why isn’t the Referee required to have all marks in the ATS column?

A: While a Level 2 assessment normally takes place in one setting, it can take place over several rating sessions to ensure as many of the criteria are met as possible. So, the Referee can miss criteria one time but show success in a later assessment, eventually satisfying all criteria in the Level 2 column of the TRR/ATS form. The ATS, however, is a snapshot in time. It is also normally a more stressful environment on purpose, designed to identify potential weak spots, so there is some accommodation for not being perfect. It isn’t a case of the Referee not showing proficiency in all the criteria; the Referee has, otherwise the Referee would not have been awarded a Level 2. But, we don’t

expect perfection during the ATS. Accordingly, it isn't unusual (and actually expected) for a Referee to have some marks in the Level 2 column during an ATS. If the Referee is recommended to move to the CRC interview, those marks become remedial actions for the Referee to work on until the Referee gets to the certification evaluation. Any significant deficiencies, however, need to be corrected before the Referee goes forward to the CRC interview. Those deficiencies may require the Referee gain more refereeing experience and take another on-court ATS.

22. After the on-court session is complete, what actions are needed to close it out?

A: The TRR/ATS form is circled as "Completed" and copies sent to the CRC and mentor. The Trainer will also provide the CRC and mentor with an opinion about the referee's readiness for evaluation. If the Referee obtains an ATS outside the Referee's 'home' region, the alternate Trainer will send a copy of the TRR/ATS results to the 'home' CRC and mentor. If videotape exists (see question 18), it should be sent to the 'home' CRC. At this point, the CRC conducts the interview and may approve the referee to apply for certification. Most RTCs do not track the completion of the ATS in their respective referee registry, but if they do, then copies may be sent to the respective RTC as well.

23. What are the sources of the CRC interview questions?

A: The questions come from two primary sources: The Rulebook and the Referee Handbook. CRCs develop their own questions to determine the Referee's depth of knowledge with the Rulebook and the Referee Handbook. Having CRCs develop their own questions prevents the sharing of questions among Referees. The questions should center on the subjects the referee had difficulty with on-court or were not exposed to during the on-court part of the ATS.

24. How long should the CRC interview take?

A: Normally no longer than an hour.

25. What happens following the interview part of the ATS?

A: Once the Referee passes the CRC interview and is recommended to apply for certification evaluation, the CRC notes that under 'Recommendations' on the bottom of the TRR/ATS form and forwards copies to the Trainer, mentor and RTC, notifies the USAPA Referee Certification Administrator, and has the Referee fill out the on-line application.

If the Referee fails the interview, the CRC notifies the Trainer and mentor and instructs the Referee to further study the rules and best practices contained in the Referee Handbook.

26. If a Referee fails the interview portion of the ATS, what recourse does he/she have to continue toward certification?

A: The CRC will schedule a second interview when, in the opinion of the CRC, sufficient time has passed. The time interval is dependent on what and how many questions the Referee could not answer satisfactorily.

27. Is there a limit on the number of on-court ATSs a referee may take?

A: Should the Referee fail the first or a second on-court ATS attempt, a third attempt is not encouraged but may be granted with the approval of the respective Section Leader of Officiating (SLO). In that case, the CRC and SLO will make the decision based on the likelihood a third attempt will obtain different results.

28. Is there a required time period between subsequent on-court ATSs?

A: The time interval is determined by the CRC and based on three primary factors: 1) how many other Referees are in the queue to get an ATS, 2) availability of the Trainer and players; and 3) when the CRC is satisfied the Referee is ready based on the Referee's demonstrated commitment to address the previously identified weaknesses.