

Article V. Advanced Training Requirements

The purpose of Advanced Training is to provide Texas Master Naturalists an opportunity to focus interests on one, or a few, specific topics that interest them. Advanced Training (AT) on an annual basis promotes continued learning and development. Advanced training is a benefit in itself, providing the experienced Texas Master Naturalist with tools to work in more advanced volunteer efforts. Although the state TMN program may occasionally provide statewide or regional AT opportunities, it is generally the responsibility of the local Chapter to ensure there are sufficient AT opportunities offered on local natural ecosystems, so members can attain their eight-hour minimum requirement. In addition, the local Chapter should be a clearinghouse for members of approved AT opportunities. AT can be accepted from workshops, seminars, and conferences held outside of the state boundaries, if, and only if, the training material meets the AT guidelines within the Chapter Management and Operations Protocols and the mission of the Texas Master Naturalist program. It is mandatory that any training material from outside the state be beneficial to the citizens and the natural resources of Texas and be Chapter and/or state program approved.

Advanced Training courses may be made available directly through Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, or any number of short-courses provided by universities or nature centers. One way for a chapter's members to meet their AT requirements is by actually sponsoring the advanced training sessions. The local Chapter's Advanced Training Coordinator, committee, or equivalent should pre-approve all advanced training opportunities before the volunteer attends. In special circumstances, approval may be sought in retrospect. With the exception of college courses, AT hours are counted one hour for each hour of advanced training. Travel time is not included for AT hours. Pre-approval from the Chapter must be obtained for any AT session including those outside Chapter boundaries. Advanced Training hours should never be counted as service hours.

In the event a college course is accepted as AT, each Credit Hour of the course counts as an AT hour (not each hour spent in class). This is not retroactive to cover courses taken prior to involvement in the TMN program.

Training by its nature assumes there is an instructor as well as a student. To be effective, Chapters may only approve training that allows for an exchange between the two, except for the narrow exceptions outlined below. If material is complex or confusing, the student should be able to ask questions or request clarification to assure learning occurs. With the advancement of online communication media, new forms of online-based training can be accepted for AT hours provided the instruction is live and participants can ask questions of the instructor. Online-based training and webinars using a live instructor will only be accepted for a maximum of 4 hours of the required 8 hours of advanced training hours. Once the minimum of 8 hours of advanced training has been obtained for the certification year, with a max 4 via web and min 4 obtained through traditional avenues, additional AT hours can be accumulated from approved online/distance based methods. (Exceptions to this rule may be considered for members meeting the Americans with Disabilities Act)

The use of mission-specific or related videos, DVDs, and archived webinars for Advanced Training should be limited in scope. Modern media that does not have live interaction between participants and an instructor or program facilitator may not be approved by a Chapter unless it meets the criteria listed below:

- The educational experience will supplement a Chapter's approved advanced training program because live instructors are not available on a particular subject germane to the ecoregion of the Chapter.
- The quality and caliber of the particular media resource is of significant relevance to the TMN mission so as to be recognized by known experts in the field and/or organizations renowned for their dedication to education.
- If approval is granted, all efforts must be made for a qualified Chapter Member to introduce the resource and lead a Q&A discussion following its conclusion.
- If there is any question as to the worthiness of a resource or validity of the request for AT approval, the State Coordinator should be consulted.

Chapter sponsored Book Clubs, where discussion is directed and related to the mission of TMN may receive Advanced Training credit for the club discussion and presentation, but time spent reading the book does not receive credit.

The Chapter Advanced Training Coordinator and/or Chapter Advanced Training Committee should use the following criteria or ask the following questions of the opportunity when reviewing and approving AT opportunities:

Does the Advanced Training opportunity:

1. Promote continued learning and development of naturalist skills?
2. Provide Master Naturalists with knowledge and skills to work in volunteer efforts?
3. Direct trained volunteers toward specific programs in need of their services?
4. Provide practical information and training for application in volunteer efforts?
5. Take advantage of local partnerships?
6. Provide Master Naturalists an opportunity to focus interests in one or a few specific topics?
7. Build on the core curriculum initially provided by the local Chapter?
8. Provide natural resource management issues and information applicable to Texas and the Chapter's local community or ecoregion?
9. Is the program/training provided by a person who is a recognized authority or skilled in the subject matter?

Advanced Training opportunities must meet all the criteria of 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, and 9 above to be approved. It is suggested that the remaining criteria also be a part of the approval consideration.