# Article V. Advanced Training (AT) Requirements

The purpose of advanced training is to provide Texas Master Naturalists an opportunity to focus their interests on one, or a multiple, specific topics that interest them or just to expand their knowledge base and skill. Also, advanced training 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 advanced training opportunities, it is the responsibility of the local Chapter to ensure that there are sufficient advanced training opportunities offered on a local or regional basis. Advanced training 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 the 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 advanced training 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, advanced training hours are counted one hour for each hour of advanced training. Travel time is **not** included for advanced training hours. Pre-approval from the Chapter must be obtained for any advanced training session including those that are outside the Chapter boundaries. Advanced training hours should never be counted as service hours.

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

Chapters may approve advanced training that allows both an exchange between the Member and an instructor as well as online-based training where there may not be an ability for an exchange. In a live classroom setting if material is complex or confusing, it allows the student to be able to ask questions or request clarification. With the advancement of online communication media, new forms of online-based training can be accepted for advanced training hours.

Online-based training and webinars 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 maximum 4 hours via web and minimum 4 hours obtained through traditional offerings, additional advanced training 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. Before approval of this modern media which would not have live interaction between participants and an instructor or program facilitator, a Chapter must consider 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 advanced training approval, the State Coordinator should be consulted before approval is granted.

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 advanced training opportunities:

Does the advanced training opportunity:

# Promote continued learning and development of naturalist skills?

1. Provide Master Naturalists with knowledge and skills to work in volunteer efforts?
2. Direct trained volunteers toward specific programs in need of their services?
3. Provide natural resource management issues and information applicable to Texas with a preferred emphasis on the Chapter’s local community or ecoregion?

# Directly address the management of natural resources?

1. Provide practical information and training for application in volunteer efforts?
2. Take advantage of local partnerships?

# Provide Master Naturalists an opportunity to focus their interests in one or a few specific topics?

1. Build on the core curriculum initially provided by the local Chapter?
2. Is the program/training provided by a person who is a recognized authority or skilled in the subject matter?

Each advanced training opportunity must meet all criteria listed in 1, 2, 3, and 4 above to be approved. It is suggested that the remaining criteria also be a part of the approval consideration. Note: numbers do not represent an order of priority, only designators.

# Actual Advanced Training Examples

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| **Bad/Unacceptable** | **Better** | **Best** |
| A lecture on astronomy and its relationship to astrology | A lecture on astronomy and how the moon and sun effect the habitat of animals and plants | A lecture on how to reduce light pollution and the effects that will have on plants and animals. |
| Attending a class on the habitat of animals in Alaska | Attending a workshop regarding Texas ecoregions | Attending a workshop regarding the Texas ecoregion where you volunteer. |
| Watching a National Geographic TV show about southwest US ecology | Watching a recorded webinar about your chapters local ecology with opportunity to email instructor later | Participating in a live webinar with instructor and participant QA about local ecology specific to management of the resources |
|  | Attending a session at the TMN Annual Meeting to learn about the events and opportunities occurring throughout Texas | Attending a session at the TMN Annual Meeting and bringing those techniques/tools taught in the session back to your local chapter with a presentation afterwards summarizing what you learned |
| Taking a course on ornamentals and vegetable gardening in Texas | Taking a course on pollinator plants of Texas and their benefits for the garden | Taking a course on native pollinator plants for your ecosystem and how to plant them and who/what they benefit |