

Choosing the Right Coaching Education

Your Guide from the
International Coaching Federation (ICF)



Changing the world starts with strong relationships.

It starts with a support network. A community. And individuals who hold those in their community accountable, empowering them to become the best versions of themselves.

This is the life and mission of a professional coach.

It's a calling — and it's one the International Coaching Federation (ICF) has helped 60,000 individuals answer over the last 30 years (and counting!).

Because high-performing coaches need an exceptional partner to collaborate, learn, and grow alongside. That's what the ICF community is all about — developing and supporting professional coaches as they embark on a noble and rewarding career focused on serving others.

Ready to Answer the Call to Become a Professional Coach?

Then, it's time to start your coaching education journey. Let's explore the different avenues of coaching education and get you started on the path to inspire and motivate others.

Begin your search by checking out our extensive [Education Search Service \(ESS\)](#) to find the ICF-accredited program that's right for you.

Why Pursue Coaching Education?

At the start of your journey, you may find yourself asking, “Do I even need a coaching education program to become a professional coach?”

Short answer: Yes!

To become a highly qualified, five-star professional coach, you'll need more than an upbeat personality and an ability to lead others. And the statistics back this up!

According to the [2022 ICF Global Consumer Awareness Study](#), 85% of coaching clients say it's important that their coach holds a professional coaching certification or credential. Bare minimum? Your future clients expect a level of professional expertise that only comes with top-tier education.



The [2023 ICF Global Coaching Study](#) estimates more than 109,000 coaches serving globally — and that number is only expected to grow! ICF-accredited education will give you an advantage in a competitive field, providing you with the tools and resources you need to succeed in your career as a coach, but also to provide the best, most credible experience for your future clients.

Completing your coaching education program will also position you to pursue an [ICF credential](#) — the gold standard in professional coaching.

Why ICF–Accredited Education?

If you're thinking about becoming a coach, [choosing an ICF-accredited program](#) is one of the best decisions you can make. Why? Because these programs meet some of the most rigorous educational and professional standards out there, ensuring that your coaching education is nothing short of top-notch.

With an ICF-accredited program, you'll gain more than just coaching skills — you'll develop the ethical foundation and professional framework you need to truly thrive. It's about setting you up for success with the tools, confidence, and credibility to make a real impact.

It's not just about learning how to coach — it's about learning how to excel.

Your Learning. Our Standards.

The number one coaching education consideration — your route to becoming an ICF-credentialed coach.

It's time to start with the end in mind.

For many seeking professional coaching education, their ultimate goal is to become an ICF-credentialed coach.

While it's true that anyone can call themselves a coach, ICF-credentialed coaches:

- Meet stringent education requirements.
- Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of coaching qualities and competencies.
- Adhere to ethical guidelines, promoting a safe and inclusive atmosphere for their clients.
- Approach their work with a sense of purpose and set the standard for coaching professionals worldwide.

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Now Streaming: Your Success

Getting the *right* coaching education initially sets you apart from the crowd, providing the comprehensive training you need to excel.

This is more than qualifying to become a professional coach. This is becoming a coach with an arsenal of resources and access to a community of like-minded professionals.

And by choosing a coaching education already accredited by ICF, you will be well prepared to take the next step in your coaching journey: getting credentialed.

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Where Do I Start?

So, you're certain of your next steps as a professional coach and see the value of pursuing coaching education to become the best coach you can be. You've set your sights on becoming an ICF-credentialed, professional coach; but now what?

Here are a few questions you may want to consider before choosing your coaching education program.

How Much Is This Going to Cost?

Costs for professional coaching education certification, both financial and time, varies by program. However, the benefits of the investment far outweigh the cost. Many who have completed a coaching education program are not only primed as top-notch professionals in a competitive industry, but also experience transformative, personal experiences that change their lives for the better.

How Long Is This Going to Take?

The length of your coaching education program will vary depending on the size of the organization as well as the type of program you are enrolled in. However, here is a general guideline for program levels and their instructional hours:

- ICF-accredited Level 1 programs are required to have at least **60 hours of instructional time**.
- Level 2 programs must have a minimum of **125 hours of instructional time**.
- Level 3 programs are required to have **75 hours of instructional time**.

For more information, visit the education provider's website for details on how their program is structured.

How Do I Know for Sure if a Program/Provider Is Accredited?

All ICF-accredited coaching education programs are listed in the ICF Education Search Service (ESS). If you are unsure if a program is accredited by ICF, search for it in the ESS. If it is listed, it holds an active accreditation with ICF.

Do any Programs Provide Financial Aid to Cover Expenses?

It is possible that some programs may offer financial assistance with the cost of completing their coaching education program. Please check with the individual ICF-accredited organization(s) you are interested in to learn more about their financial aid or scholarship opportunities. Or you may qualify for a scholarship through the [ICF Foundation](#).

Should I Take Online or In-Person Courses?

There are pros and cons to both in-person and online coaching courses. While online courses are flexible, allowing you to juggle professional and personal responsibilities, in-person classes offer the benefit of a face-to-face community. Blended courses (online and in-person hybrid courses) deliver a mix of both.

Choose the program that you feel is right for the season you are in.

Are There Programs Available in My Language?

ICF accredits programs in more than 50 languages and 100 countries around the world. You can learn more about program languages in the ICF Education Search Service (ESS).

What Sort of Prerequisites Do I Need?

While most organizations do not require an advanced degree for enrollment, each program's admission requirements are different. It is always best to check with the ICF-accredited organization you wish to be a part of to determine what academic qualifications you need to enroll in the program.

Do I Need to Pick a Program Based on The Type of Coaching I Want to Do?

One of the most exciting things about coaching is the different niches clients are searching for. **These include leadership coaching, executive coaching, health and wellness coaching, spiritual coaching, life coaching, academic coaching, and more.**

You are not required to select a niche prior to enrolling in your coaching education program. Many programs offer general training, relevant across all coaching spheres. However, if you already know the specific type of coaching you would like to do, the ICF Education Search Service (ESS) is available to help you search program topics.

I've Completed My Education — Now What Do I Do To Get My ICF Credential?

When you complete your coaching education program, you will then complete your client coaching experience hours. The number of these hours you need to complete [vary by credential and program type](#).

After those hours are completed, you may apply for an ICF credential using the appropriate credential application path.

ICF Credentials and Standards staff will review your application and, once approved, will provide you with access to schedule your ICF Exam. Upon passing the exam, you will receive your credential from ICF!

You're on Your Way!



Explore our [Education Search Service \(ESS\)](#) to find the ICF-accredited program that's right for you.



Unlock Extra Value: ICF Membership

Once you've enrolled in at least 60 hours of coach-specific education that meets ICF standards, you're eligible to become an ICF member — a gateway to a world of support and opportunities designed to help you thrive as a coach.

Here's a glimpse of what membership offers:

- **Discounted ICF Credential Application** – Save on advancing your professional credentials.
- **Reciprocal Peer Coaching Program** – Engage with fellow coaches to refine your skills and grow.
- **Global Community** – Connect with over 60,000 coaches worldwide for support and inspiration.
- **Learning Opportunities** – Access free and discounted resources to keep growing.

[Discover how ICF membership can elevate your coaching journey!](#)



Ready to Begin?

Here's your next step: check out our [Education Search Service \(ESS\)](#) to find an ICF-accredited program that's right for you.

We're excited for you to begin your coaching education journey — and to join our welcoming community of expert coaches ready to make a difference in the world around them!

[Education Search Service \(ESS\)](#)

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