

ACC Minimum Skills Requirements



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The purpose of the ACC Minimum Skills Requirements is to outline the essential skills needed to demonstrate competency at the ACC level. The document follows the ICF Core Competencies and in each competency you will come across the following sections: Key Skills, Behaviors Consistent With ICF Standards, and Behaviors Inconsistent With ICF Standards.

Key Skills.

These are based on the ICF Core Competencies and represent the foundational coaching abilities relevant to each competency area, applicable across all credential levels.

Behaviors Consistent With ICF Standards.

These sections describe the observable actions coaches should demonstrate that reflect effective coaching practice at the ACC level.

Behaviors Inconsistent With ICF Standards.

These lists point to actions that may disrupt the coaching process or reduce the quality of the coaching experience, and that do not meet the standards for expected coaching skills at the ACC level.

Tip: For a deeper understanding, compare the ACC Minimum Skills Requirements alongside the ICF Core Competencies – seeing them side by side will give you valuable insights into how they align and help you elevate your coaching practice.

Competency 1: Demonstrates Ethical Practice

Familiarity with the ICF Code of Ethics and its application is required for all levels of coaching. You must demonstrate a strong understanding of ethical coaching practice to earn any level of ICF credential.

Behaviors Consistent With ICF Coaching Standards

- Demonstrate a strong understanding and alignment with the ICF Code of Ethics.
- Consistently stay in the role of the coach, demonstrating knowledge of how to structure a coaching conversation and stay focused on future and present issues.
- Use key coaching skills such as trust, presence, active listening, and evoking awareness to facilitate the client's own insights.

Behaviors Inconsistent With ICF Coaching Standards

- The coach is in clear violation of the ICF Code of Ethics.
- The coach's focus is primarily on telling the client what to do or how to do it (consulting mode). Or if the conversation is based primarily on the past, particularly the emotional past (therapeutic mode).
- The coach primarily gives advice or tells the client what to do throughout the session.

Competency 2: Embodies a Coaching Mindset

Embodying a coaching mindset — a mindset that is open, curious, flexible, and client-centered — is a process that requires ongoing personal and professional learning and development as a coach. These elements take place over the course of a coach's professional journey and cannot be fully captured in a single moment in time.

Your understanding of this competency is evaluated in the ICF ACC Exam.

Competency 3: Establishes and Maintains Agreements

Key Skills

The key coaching skills across all levels for Competency 3: Establishes and Maintains Agreements are:

- The coach co-creates an agreement for the session.
- The coach partners with the client to define the components of the agreement.
- The coach continues in the direction of the client's desired outcome, unless the client indicates otherwise.

Behaviors Consistent With ICF Coaching Standards

The coaching skills demonstrated at the ACC level under Competency 3 are outlined in the behavioral statements below:

- Coach explores the client's topic with the client.
- Coach and client reach agreement on what the client wants to accomplish as a session outcome.
- Coach explores the significance of the coaching outcome to the client.
- Coach attends to the agreed upon agenda throughout the session.

Behaviors Inconsistent With ICF Coaching Standards

- There is no conversation between the coach and client to agree on a topic for the session.
- The coach chooses the topic of the session.
- The coach does not verbally confirm what the client wants to accomplish as a session outcome.
- The coach does not coach around the topic the client has chosen.
- If the conversation shifts away from the chosen agenda during the session, the coach does not notice or explore with the client what direction they would like to take for the rest of the session.

Competency 4: Cultivates Trust and Safety

Key Skills

The key coaching skills across all levels for Competency 4: Cultivates Trust and Safety are:

- The coach partners with the client to create a safe, supportive environment that encourages the client to share freely.
- The coach demonstrates trust in and respect for the client's unique ways of processing and creating.
- The coach is open and transparent to foster mutual trust.
- The coach acknowledges the client's unique contributions in the coaching process.

Behaviors Consistent With ICF Coaching Standards

The coaching skills demonstrated at the ACC level under Competency 4 are outlined in the behavioral statements below:

- Coach acknowledges the client's work in the session.
- Coach expresses respect, support, or concern for the client.
- Coach supports the client's expression of feelings, perceptions, concerns, or beliefs.

Behaviors Inconsistent With ICF Coaching Standards

- The coach demonstrates significant interest in their own knowledge or view of the situation, rather than exploring or prioritizing the client's perspective.
- The coach does not seek information from the client about their thinking, feelings, perceptions, concerns, or beliefs, or is unresponsive when such information is shared.
- The coach is unsupportive, dismissive, judgmental, or disrespectful toward the client.
- The coach misses opportunities to acknowledge the client's work during the session.

Competency 5: Maintains Presence

Key Skills

The key coaching skills across all levels for Competency 5: Maintains Presence are:

- The coach remains engaged and responsive to the client throughout the session.
- The coach remains curious and observant of the client.
- The coach intentionally provides space for reflection.
- The coach remains present through both conversation and silence.
- The coach partners with the client throughout the session.

Behaviors Consistent With ICF Coaching Standards

The coaching skills demonstrated at the ACC level under Competency 5 are outlined in the behavioral statements below:

- Coach is observant and responsive to the client.
- Coach demonstrates curiosity about the client, or their agenda, or both.
- Coach provides space for the client to lead during the session.
- Coach is silent to allow time for the client to reflect.

Behaviors Inconsistent With ICF Coaching Standards

- The coach consistently misses opportunities to inquire into or explore the client's verbal and non-verbal responses or insights.
- The coach interferes with the client's process by directing, interrupting, or by filling silence.
- The coach is focused on their own performance or demonstration of knowledge, showing significant interest in their own view of the client or situation rather than curiosity about the client's perspective and agenda.
- The coach leads and directs the conversation instead of partnering with the client on what they want to explore next, missing opportunities to co-create the session.

Competency 6: Listens Actively

Key Skills

The key coaching skills across all levels for Competency 6: Listens Actively are:

- The coach hears what the client is and is not communicating in relation to their agenda.
- The coach integrates the client's unique use of words into their questions and observations.
- The coach notices and inquires about the client's non-verbal cues and body language.
- The coach offers what they see, hear, feel, or sense, and accepts the client's response.

Behaviors Consistent With ICF Coaching Standards

The coaching skills demonstrated at the ACC level under Competency 6 are outlined in the behavioral statements below:

- Coach listens by recognizing feelings, perceptions, challenges, or beliefs.
- Coach inquires about, explores, or includes the client's use of language.
- Coach summarizes or paraphrases what the client communicates to confirm the coach's understanding.

Behaviors Inconsistent With ICF Coaching Standards

- The coach does not demonstrate listening that is focused on or responsive to what or how the client communicates.
- The coach's responses are not related to what the client is seeking to achieve.
- The coach appears to be listening for the place where they can demonstrate their knowledge about the topic or tell the client what to do about the topic.
- The coach's summaries or paraphrasing are overly wordy or complex.
- The coach does not ask the client to respond to the coach's summaries or paraphrasing to ensure accuracy or shared understanding.

Competency 7: Evokes Awareness

Key Skills

The key coaching skills across all levels for Competency 7: Evokes Awareness are:

- The coach uses questions, observations, silence, and other techniques to support the client in gaining insight into themselves and their topic.
- The coach shares personal responses — such as comments or intuition — without attachment or direction, in ways that may support the client’s insights or learning.
- The coach explores the client’s emotions, needs, underlying beliefs, and ways of thinking, creating, and learning.
- The coach invites the client to identify influences on their current and future thinking, behavior, or emotions.
- Coach adapts their approach to the client’s needs and style.
- The coach intentionally allows space for the client to respond fully.

Behaviors Consistent With ICF Coaching Standards

The coaching skills demonstrated at the ACC level under Competency 7 are outlined in the behavioral statements below:

- Coach supports the client in viewing the situation from different perspectives.
- Coach inquires about the client’s feelings, perceptions, behaviors, or beliefs.
- Coach asks clear, open-ended questions, one at a time.

Behaviors Inconsistent With ICF Coaching Standards

- The coach does not partner with the client to explore the client’s knowledge, perspectives, ideas, beliefs, or agenda.
- The majority of the coach’s questions and observations are leading, closed, or contain predetermined answers.
- The coach’s questions and observations reflect the coach’s agenda or issues, rather than the client’s stated agenda or focus.
- The coach does not allow sufficient space for the client to consider and respond to a question before the coach asks another question.
- The coach’s way of speaking is complex or confusing to the client.
- The coach’s questions and observations focus mainly on how to reach the desired outcome, without also exploring the client’s feelings, perceptions, behaviors, or beliefs.

Competency 8: Facilitates Client Growth

Key Skills

The key coaching skills across all levels for Competency 8: Facilitates Client Growth are:

- The coach partners with the client to explore their session progress and learning.
- The coach supports the client in considering how to integrate new awareness into their worldview and behaviors.
- The coach partners with the client to design actions that reflect new learning.
- The coach supports the client in identifying what they need to follow through with their designed actions.
- The coach partners with the client to close the session.

Behaviors Consistent With ICF Coaching Standards

The coaching skills demonstrated at the ACC level under Competency 8 are outlined in the behavioral statements below:

- Coach asks questions about what the client has learned during the session.
- Coach supports the client to use their learning to plan next steps.
- Coach supports the client to close the session.

Behaviors Inconsistent With ICF Coaching Standards

- The coach does not invite the client to identify or explore session progress or how the client's learning can be applied to future actions or activities that support the client's agenda.
- The coach does not partner with the client to create sufficient clarity for what the client is going to do after the session.
- The coach directs the client to carry out specific actions prescribed by the coach, rather than allowing the client to design their own actions.
- The coach chooses the timing, or method, of closing the session.



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