



A TO Z OF
**CONTINUING EDUCATION
AND RECERTIFICATION**



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INTRODUCTION

Who is AST?

The Association of Surgical Technologists (AST) is the national professional organization for surgical technologists. AST's primary purpose is to ensure that surgical technologists have the knowledge and skills to administer patient care of the highest quality by setting standards for education, supporting state and federal legislative efforts, and providing quality continuing education opportunities.

AST

6 West Dry Creek Circle, Ste 200

Littleton, CO 80120-8031

800-637-7433

www.ast.org

Business Hours:

Monday – Friday

8 am - 4:30 pm MDT



Who is The NBSTSA?

The National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA) oversees all aspects of the national certification examinations including developing and administering the exams—and grant the CST and CSFA* credentials to individuals who successfully pass the exam.

NBSTSA

6 West Dry Creek Circle, Ste 100

Littleton, CO 80120-8031

800-707-0057

www.nbstsa.org

Business Hours:

Monday–Friday

8 am - 5:30 pm MDT



**THE NATIONAL BOARD
OF SURGICAL TECHNOLOGY
AND SURGICAL ASSISTING**

* CST® and CSFA® are registered trademarks of the NBSTSA.

RECERTIFICATION: TWO METHODS TO RECERTIFY

General Information

AST is responsible for verifying, processing and recording CE credits earned by the CST and CSFA to be applied toward the renewal of the credential. The CE credits are maintained in the members CE file (nonmembers see “General Information for Nonmembers”).

Three Methods A Member Can Confirm CE Credits

1. When CE credits are recorded a CE Credit Letter confirming the number of CE credits that were accepted and recorded is mailed for personal records.
2. AST website using member login information at www.ast.org.
3. Every January, AST mails an annual CE Credit Letter to all members with the total number of CE credits that have been earned during the current certification cycle.

AST-Approved CE

AST is also the approval body for CE. Businesses and organizations that would like to offer CE to the CST and CSFA are required to submit their CE offerings to AST for review and possible approval. The CST and CSFA are required to earn AST approved CE credits. The list of approved CE is available on the AST website. However, this does **not** apply to health-care facility inservices; live events that are planned and sponsored by nonprofit organizations that are accredited by the Accreditation Review Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME); or live events approved through the American Dental Association's Continuing Education Recognition Program (ADA-CERP) and Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology (JCAHPO). Healthcare facilities are **not** required to complete the CE program approval process for inservices as well as ACCME accredited nonprofit organizations who sponsor a live event or live events approved through the ADA-CERP and JCAHPO are **not** required to complete the approval process. Further details are provided in the “Method 1” section on inservices and nonprofit organizations.

Submitting CE Credits

3 ways are acceptable for submitting the AST CE Reporting Form with supporting documentation:

- ▲ **Mail:** AST, 6 West Dry Creek Circle, Suite 200, Member Services Dept, Littleton, CO 80120-8031.
- ▲ **FAX:** (303) 694-9169 to the attention of the Member Services Dept. *Do not mail CE documentation that has been sent by FAX.*
- ▲ **Email scanned documentation in PDF format to:** memserv@ast.org. *Do not mail CE documentation that has been sent by Email.*

It is recommended that CE credits be submitted six months prior to recertification. Don't wait until five to seven days or less from the date of the expiration of the credential.

On average, CE credits are processed within 10 business days upon receipt of the CE documentation.

Don't worry! If your AST membership lapses for more than 90 days, the CE credits processed and recorded while you were a member are maintained by AST and can be applied toward the renewal of the credential.

Method 1: Recertify by Earning Continuing Education (CE) Credits

The CST must earn 60 CE credits and the CSFA must earn 75 CE credits during the four-year certification cycle in order to renew the credential by continuing education.

Advantages of Earning CE Credits as an AST Member:

- ▲ Avoid paying the \$400 nonmember CE processing fee.
- ▲ Member does not have to pay a processing fee for CE credits earned through AST. However, a processing fee is required for CE credits earned through other organizations and businesses; see policy in the *AST CE Policies for the CST & CSFA* on the AST website.
- ▲ Ability to track earned CE credits online through the Members area of the AST website.
- ▲ Receive yearly report of cumulative CE credits.
- ▲ Online CE can be earned through the AST website and multiple CE credit packages available at a substantial discount.

- ▲ Savings on annual AST events including the Instructors Forum, Instructors Workshop and Annual National Conference.

There are a variety of opportunities available to earn CE credits. The following describes some of the more common methods for earning CE credits.

Healthcare Facility Sponsored Inservices

Healthcare facility inservices are accepted by AST for CE credits if they are relevant to the medical-surgical practice of surgical technology or surgical assisting. The following policies apply in regard to the acceptance of inservices:

- Healthcare facility orientation is **not** accepted for CE credits.
- ACLS, ADLS, BLS, BDLS, BTLS, CPR and PALS are accepted for CE credits.
- If the employer sponsors or provides funds for an employee(s) to attend a conference, forum, seminar, symposium or workshop or complete any other type of CE activity *sponsored by an organization other than the healthcare facility*, the *program* must be AST approved in order to have the CE credits count towards certification renewal.
- AST accepts annual mandatory CE activities relevant to the medical-surgical practice of surgical technology and surgical assisting.
- Training provided by a healthcare facility and work experience CE credits are **not** awarded for on-the-job training, healthcare facility orientation, or work experience that the CST and CSFA completes as an employee of the healthcare facility providing the training. Example, CST is completing on-the-job training in learning the first scrub role to be a member of the healthcare facility's cardiovascular team. This training is distinct from attending healthcare facility sponsored inservices as described above.

Surgical Mission

- CSTs and CSFAs who perform their job duties as a member of a surgical team that travels to a foreign country to perform surgeries during surgical mission trips are accepted by AST for CE credits.
 - a. One time per four-year certification cycle the CST

- may submit a surgical mission trip to AST for CE credits. The surgical mission trip is awarded 10 CE credits no matter the length of the mission.
- b. The AST Surgical Mission verification form must be completed by the CST including authorized signature of mission team leader, and a copy submitted with the CE Reporting Form. Incomplete forms will be returned.
- **Submitting Inservice CE Credits:** A certificate of attendance with an authorized signature, eg, surgery department supervisor, clinical educator or other individual authorized by the employer. The certificate should also include the name of the healthcare facility, indicate it is an inservice, title of inservice, date of inservice, and number of CE credits. The certificate(s) should be submitted with the AST CE Reporting Form.

AST CE Online Resource Center

- ▲ **Three free CE credits per year:** That adds up to 12 CE credits or 20% of the required 60 CE credits for the CST during the four-year certification cycle.
- ▲ **AST Member CE Packages**
 - Package 1: 21 CE credits; \$35
 - Package 2: 18 CE credits; \$30
 - Package 3: 10 CE credits; \$15 Neurosurgery
 - Package 4: 10 CE credits; \$15; Orthopedic
 - Package 5: 12 CE credits; \$19; General
 - Package 6: 12 CE credits; \$19
 - Package 7: 17 CE credits; \$29
 - Package 8: 8 CE credits; \$13
 - Package 9: 17 CE credits; \$29
 - Package 10: 22 CE credits; \$37
 - Package 11: 22 CE credits; \$37
 - Package 12: 13 CE credits; \$21
 - Package 13: 17.5 CE credits; \$29
 - Please see website for new packages.
- ▲ **Submitting Online CE Credits:**
 - Pay online and the CE credits post to your AST record automatically within 24 to 48 hours.
 - Print the Certificate of Completion of each test and submit with the AST CE Reporting Form with payment to AST.
- ▲ **Available 24/7 at www.ast.org**

The Surgical Technologist

The CE article featured in AST's monthly Journal provides up-to-date information concerning a relevant surgical topic as well as the ability to earn one or more CE credits. There is no expiration date on the articles and tests may be submitted from the first CE article published in 1980 to the present.

▲ Submitting Journal CE Credits:

- Submit the answers sheets to AST with the appropriate processing fee; make a copy of the answer sheets for your records.
 - **Members:** \$6 per CE credit, not per test (Note: If test is 2 or 3 CE credits, fee is \$12 and \$18 respectively or 1.5 CE credits \$9).
 - **Nonmembers:** \$10 per CE credit, in addition to the \$400 nonmember processing fee (Note: If a test is 2 or 3 CE credits, fee is \$20 and \$30 respectively).
 - Do **not** submit separate checks for each journal test. Multiple journal tests can be submitted and paid with one check or money order; eg, 5 journal tests x \$6 = \$30
 - If possible, use a credit or debit card; it is a faster option for the processing and payment of CE credits.
- Printed on the journal test answer sheet is the month, year, test number and number of CE credits the test is worth, eg, 1, 2 or 3 CE credits. If it is an older test that doesn't show the number of CE credits, the test is worth 1 CE credit.
- You do **not** need to submit an AST CE Reporting Form with the journal tests.

▲ Reasons Journal Tests are Returned:

- Payment is not included and/or nonmember did not include \$400 nonmember processing fee.
- Overpayment.
- Failed Quiz: A minimum of 70% must be scored on the test. Review the journal article and resubmit a new test with the appropriate fee for processing.
- Repeat: The test(s) were previously submitted and processed. AST online and journal CE can only be earned on a one-time basis.

Other Enduring Material

Enduring material is self-directed learning in which the CE activity is independently completed.

- ▲ The enduring material must be AST approved in order to earn the CE credits.
- ▲ AST does **not** accept enduring material CE offered by healthcare manufacturers.
- ▲ Types of enduring materials include but are not limited to CE articles and completing a post-article CE exam that are offered hard-copy or electronically; viewing recorded lectures and completing a post-lecture exam that are offered on CD, DVD, online, video tape or other electronic means.
- ▲ **Submitting Enduring Material CE Credits**
 - AST enduring materials: Refer to sections "AST CE Online Resource Center" and *The Surgical Technologist*
 - Other enduring materials: Upon completion of an AST approved enduring material offered by another business or organization, the CST and CSFA must submit a copy of the certificate of completion provided by the business or organization with the AST CE Reporting Form; the organization or business does **not** directly report the CE credits to AST.

AST Annual National Conference

Earn up to 18 CE credits per year! Plus additional CE credits can be earned attending preconference events.

- ▲ **Submitting Conference CE Credits**
 - **Member:** CE credits are automatically recorded in your AST CE file. A CE credit conference confirmation letter is mailed for your personal records four to six weeks post-conference.
 - **Nonmember:** A CE credit conference confirmation letter is mailed four to six weeks post-conference. A copy of the letter should be included when submitting the AST CE Reporting Form with the \$400 nonmember processing fee.

State Assembly

State Assemblies provide CE during meetings as well as serve as the grass-roots organization in regard to state legislative efforts. Announcements of State Assembly meetings are published in *The Surgical Technologist*, on the states' websites, and the AST website, www.ast.org, under the State Assembly tab. State Assemblies also contact state members of upcoming meetings through email and mailings.

▲ Submitting State Assembly CE Credits

- All State Assemblies are required to complete the AST CE program approval process prior to the dates of the meeting in order for the CE credits to be approved. The participant should verify that the meeting has been AST approved.
- The State Assembly is required to provide a certificate of attendance to the participants.
 - **Member:** Include a copy of the certificate when submitting the AST CE Reporting Form.
 - **Nonmember:** Include a copy of the certificate when submitting the AST CE Reporting Form with the \$400 nonmember processing fee.

Nonprofit Professional Organizations

AST accepts the CE credits offered at live events (eg, conferences, forums, symposiums, workshops), including *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit(s)*[™], that are offered by nonprofit organizations who are accredited by the ACCME, or approved by the ADA-CERP and JCAHPO.

▲ Submitting Nonprofit Professional Organization CE Credits

- The nonprofit organization should provide a certificate of attendance that is signed by an individual designated to represent the organization. The certificate should also include the name of the organization, title of event, date(s) of event, and number of CE credits.
 - **Member:** Include a copy of the certificate when submitting the AST CE Reporting Form.
 - **Nonmember:** Include a copy of the certificate when submitting the AST CE Reporting Form with the \$400 nonmember processing fee.

College Courses

College courses that are relevant to the medical-surgical practice of surgical technology or surgical assisting can be submitted to AST for CE credits.

- ▲ College courses must be completed with a minimum grade of "C."
- ▲ The courses must be completed at an institution that is accredited by an organization recognized by the US Department of Education.
- ▲ Surgical assistant college courses submitted for CE credits must be completed at a CAAHEP-accredited surgical assistant program.
- ▲ General nursing and physician assistant college courses that are not specifically related to the medical-surgical practice of surgical technology or surgical assisting will not be accepted for CE credits.
- ▲ Determining the Number of CE Credits:
 - College courses submitted as quarter hours will be converted to an equivalent number of semester hours, eg, quarter hour x 0.75 = semester hour.
 - College courses are awarded 5 CE credits for each semester hour completed, eg 3 college credit semester course: 3 x 5 = 15 CE credits.
- ▲ **Submitting College Courses for CE Credits**
 - **Member and Nonmember:** Submit an unofficial college transcript with the AST CE Reporting Form – no exceptions made. Nonmembers include the \$400 nonmember processing fee.
 - **Recommendation:** Provide copy of course descriptions from the current edition of the college catalog. The descriptions assist in determining the relevancy of the course(s) to the medical-surgical practice of surgical technology or surgical assisting.



Writing for Health-Related Publications

The CST or CSFA who authors a CE article may be awarded CE credits due to the research that is necessary in order to write the article.

- ▲ When writing a CE article to be published for a magazine or journal, the article must be a health-related publication. Additionally, the publisher must have a peer-review process in place in order to determine if the article meets the publishing standards of the magazine or journal.
- ▲ CE credit will only be awarded for the initial publication of an article.
- ▲ Four CE credits are awarded per 2,000 type written words. Partial CE credits are awarded in increments of 500 words, eg, 2,500 words equal 1.25 CE credits. The word count does **not** include the post-article CE exam, reference page or bibliography.
- ▲ **Submitting Publication for CE Credits**
 - *The Surgical Technologist*: The CE credits will be automatically entered for CSTs and CSFAs that write a CE article for the AST journal.
 - Other publications: CST or CSFA must submit an official, published copy of the article that has his/her name printed as the author, name of the magazine or journal, date of publication and volume number with the AST CE Reporting Form.

Instruction of Health Professionals

- ▲ CSTs or CSFAs who provide a CE lecture may be awarded CE credits.
- ▲ This method applies to providing a CE lecture at an AST approved CE program or healthcare facility sponsored inservice, or serve as an instructor during an AST approved CE workshop, eg, wound closure workshop at a State Assembly meeting.
- ▲ CE credits are **not** awarded for providing lectures or lab/clinical demonstrations when it is part of a CST's or CSFA's job duty, such as educators, preceptors and medical sales representatives.
- ▲ **Awarding CE Credits**
 - The lecture or workshop must last a minimum of 30 minutes.
 - CST and CSFA presenters and instructors receive two CE credits for the initial preparation of a topic.
 - For example, a lecture lasts 45 minutes; the CST or CSFA presenter would be awarded 2.75 CE credits.
 - However, if the lecture is repeated at a future program, the CE credits are only awarded for the length of the lecture.
- ▲ **Submitting CE Credits for Presentation or Instruction**
 - AST sponsored programs (eg, national conference, forums, workshops): The CST or CSFA presenter must be a member of AST in order to present. The CST or CSFA is not required to submit documentation as proof of giving a CE lecture or serving as a workshop instructor; AST will automatically enter the CE credits in the individuals CE file.
 - Other programs: CSTs and CSFAs that present a CE lecture or serve as an instructor at a non-AST sponsored program, such as a State Assembly meeting, must submit a copy of the program agenda with the AST CE Reporting Form. The program agenda must include the name of the presenter, title of the presentation or workshop, and length of activity.

Why CE Credits Are Not Accepted

CE credits not accepted could present a challenge in recertifying if there is not sufficient time left to earn additional CE credits before the expiration date of the credential. **As previously mentioned, it is recommended submitting CE credits six months prior to the certification expiration date.** This allows time to earn additional CE credits within the certification cycle if CE credits were not accepted and avoid taking the NBSTSA national certification examination to renew the credential. The following are some of the more common reasons for CE credits not being accepted.

CE Credit Value Not Met

CST attends a lecture or program, or views a recorded CE lecture that is less than 30 minutes. One CE credit equals 50 to 60 minutes of activity. Partial CE credits are accepted by AST; however, the CE activity must last a minimum of 30 minutes. After 30 minutes, CE credits are accepted in 15 minute increments.

CE Credits Not Earned During Current Certification Cycle

CE credits earned outside of the dates of the current four-year certification cycle are not accepted. CE credits must be earned during the current certification cycle. CE credits are accepted based on the date of completing the CE activity, not when the CE activity was purchased or date submitted to AST.

Nonmember Fee Not Included

The nonmember CE processing fee of \$400 is not included when CE credits are submitted (see "Nonmember Information" section below for details).

CE Reporting Form Not Submitted with CE Credits

CE credits are submitted without a completed CE Reporting Form; form is available on the AST website, www.ast.org. With the exception of AST journal and online CE, all CE activities including State Assembly meetings, healthcare facility inservices and enduring material (independent study) must be listed on the CE Reporting Form.

Documentation Not Included with CE Reporting Form

Documentation verifying completion of CE listed on CE Reporting Form is not included when submitted to AST. With the exception of the AST journal and online CE, copies of verification forms must be included with the CE Reporting Form.

Accepted documentation includes certificate of completion or certificate of attendance; an attendance sheet is accepted for healthcare facility inservices (see previous information on healthcare facility sponsored inservices for details). Documentation that is not accepted includes announcements of events, program agenda/brochure, tests, or paid receipts.

CE Activity Not Relevant to the Practice of Surgical Technology

CE credits are returned if it is determined the CE activity is not relevant to the medical-surgical practice of surgical technology.

Previously Completed CE Submitted Again

CE credits previously submitted are sent in again and are not accepted. With the exception of ACLS, ADLS, BLS, BDLS, BTLS, CPR and PALS (each time the CST renews one of those items, it can be submitted for CE credits), previously completed CE that was submitted to AST cannot be resubmitted for CE credits.

CE Activity is Not Approved by AST

CE credits were earned by completing a CE activity or attending a CE event that is not AST approved (see previous section AST Approved CE for details).

Nonmember Information

CE credits earned outside the dates of AST membership are subject to the \$400 nonmember processing fee – **no exceptions**. If the CST joins AST after earning CE credits, the CE credits are considered nonmember and the \$400 nonmember processing fee must be paid. The \$400 fee includes one-year of AST membership. The \$400 payment must be included when submitting the CE Reporting Form with supporting documentation. CE credits are reviewed before the \$400 is charged to a credit card or check is cashed. If some (or all) of the CE credits are not accepted, the CE documentation is returned with the \$400 payment.

Method 2: Recertifying by Examination

The other route that is available for renewing the CST or CSFA credential is retaking the NBSTSA national certification examination. For examination questions, information and scheduling information contact the NBSTSA – contact information is on page 2.



The national certification examination and credential are offered by the NBSTSA. They administer the national certification examinations and issue the certifications for CSTs and CSFAs. **AST and the NBSTSA are two separate organizations.** AST processes the Continuing Education Credits for individuals recertifying by credits, and the NBSTSA completes the actual recertification and issues certification card and certificate.

- ▲ **Certified Surgical Technologist® (CST)**
recertification examination: \$399 for AST members and \$499 for nonmembers
- ▲ **Certified Surgical First Assistant® (CSFA)**
recertification examination: \$399 for AST members and \$499 for nonmembers

For examination questions contact the NBSTSA at 800-707-0057, option1 or www.nbstsa.org.

The NBSTSA GENERAL INFORMATION

The following is general information in regard to renewing the credential through the NBSTSA. For specific questions contact the NBSTSA or review information that is available on its website, www.nbstsa.org.

NBSTSA Renewal of the Credential by Continuing Education

IMPORTANT – Once the CE credits have been submitted and recorded by AST you are **not** done with the renewal process. The NBSTSA is responsible for the renewal of the credential. A completed NBSTSA Renewal Form must be submitted to the NBSTSA with the **renewal fee** and a **photo** of yourself. The NBSTSA only accepts original signatures; therefore, faxed and/or emailed applications will not be accepted. The NBSTSA issues the new certification card with your photo as well as the new certificate.

Renewal can be completed six months in advance of the expiration date of the certification cycle. However, this does not change the original expiration date/start date of the next certification cycle.

Proof of earning CE credits does **not** have to be submitted to the NBSTSA; the CE credits that AST recorded can be verified automatically by the NBSTSA. Applications must be received by your expiration date; otherwise a new certification number and date will be issued to illustrate the lapse in certification. The NBSTSA takes approximately four to six weeks to process the Renewal Form and issue the new certification card and certificate.

All CE credits **must** be earned during the current certification cycle. CE credits earned outside the dates of the certification cycle will not be accepted by AST or the NBSTSA, and there is no 30-day or longer extension of the certification cycle in order to earn CE credits. The individual will be required to retake the national certification examination in order to renew the credential.

Extra CE credits do not “roll” over to the next certification cycle per the NBSTSA policy. As stated above, CE credits must be earned during the current certification cycle; therefore, extra CE credits cannot be carried over to the next certification cycle. If you complete the renewal six months or less



before the expiration date, it is recommended to wait until the start of the next certification cycle to submit CE credits. No refund is given for AST online CE tests or packages.

If the certification has expired, but the required number of CE credits were earned during the certification cycle, the CE credits can be submitted to AST for processing (nonmembers must pay the \$400 nonmember processing fee). However, the NBSTSA will charge a late renewal fee in addition to the standard renewal fee if the renewal is submitted more than 30 days past expiration. See the NBSTSA website for the list of late renewal fees. When the certification lapses, the date the NBSTSA receives the Renewal Form will be the new date for the start of the next certification cycle. If you don't renew the credential within 24 months of the certification expiration date, you must retake the national certification examination.

If any discrepancies are found with the new certification card and/or certificate, contact the NBSTSA.

Name Change

Previous or currently certified individuals who have a name change are required to request the change through the NBSTSA. The "Name Change and/or Replacement Form" is available on the NBSTSA website, www.nbstsa.org.

CHECKLIST BEFORE SUBMITTING CE CREDITS TO AST

Use the following as a personal checklist to confirm all steps have been completed prior to submitting CE credits to AST.

- All CE credits were earned while an AST member.
- Nonmember: Nonmember \$400 processing fee.
- All CE credits earned during the current certification cycle.
- CE credits are relevant to the medical-surgical practice of surgical technology or surgical assisting.
- CE credits are approved by AST.
- Completed CE Reporting Form.
- Copies of supporting documentation (eg, certificates of attendance, certificates of completion, etc). Keep originals of documentation.
- 3rd Party Processing Fee (fee structure is on the back of the AST CE Reporting Form).
- The NBSTSA Renewal Form with renewal fee and photo submitted to the NBSTSA.

Money orders, personal checks, institutional checks, American Express, MasterCard, VISA are accepted. Checks need to be made payable to AST.

DEFINITIONS

CE program: A CE program is defined as a live program including but not limited to conferences, forums, healthcare facility sponsored inservices, seminars, symposiums or workshops in which the CST and CSFA attend CE lectures or receive hands-on training.

Enduring material: Enduring material is non-live offerings including, but not limited to, CE article delivered hard-copy or electronically that has a post-article CE exam; viewing a recorded CE lecture online, CD, or other electronic means that has a post-article CE exam. It is a method of self-directed learning in which the CST and CSFA independently completes CE activity.

Healthcare facility inservice: An inservice is a CE activity that is developed, reviewed and provided inhouse through the healthcare facility where the CST is employed to improve skills or learn about new developments in the medical-surgical practice of surgical technology and surgical assisting.



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