



PROTOCOLS

DANGEROUS GAME WALKING QUALIFICATIONS

FGASA Apprentice Trails Guide

FGASA Trails Guide

FGASA Professional Trails Guide

FGASA SKS (DG) Guide

THE FIELD GUIDES ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

(Association incorporated under Section 21)

Registration number: 2004/003844/08

PROTOCOLS: DANGEROUS GAME WALKING QUALIFICATIONS

FGASA DANGEROUS GAME WALKING QUALIFICATIONS

These qualifications apply to walking guides, walking in areas where dangerous game occur. These qualifications are gained through experience (logged hours and encounters) training and mentorship.

Once a guide enters the Apprentice Trails Guide program, the hours and encounters recorded, will accumulate towards further dangerous game walking qualifications.

FGASA APPRENTICE TRAILS GUIDE

The FGASA Apprentice Trails Guide is an individual who is in training (in an apprentice programme) to become a Trails Guide and will learn how to function as 2nd Rifle and later as 1st Rifle during the training phase. The apprentice programme is a steppingstone in the process for a guide to attain a FGASA Trails Guide Qualification. The Apprentice Trails Guide is not qualified to conduct trails or walks in areas where dangerous game occurs without a FGASA Professional Trails Guide, or SKS (DG) Guide **present** until such time as the Apprentice Trails Guide has completed the program and has been awarded the NQF2 VPDA skills program and registration with NDT.

How to proceed

To become a FGASA Apprentice Trails Guide the candidate must have successfully completed:

- The FGASA Apprentice Field Guide NQF2 (minimum requirement), or Field Guide NQF4 or Professional Field Guide Certificate.
- Have a valid Basic (US119567) or Intermediate (US120496) First Aid Certificate
- The FGASA Trails Guide theory exam
- The FGASA Advanced Rifle Handling
- Comply to all legal requirements (CATHSSETA) as well as all FGASA requirements
- Log a minimum of 50 hours on a trail as observer led by a FGASA Professional Trails Guide, or SKS (DG) Guide. This can be in the workplace during guiding based activities, during a FGASA endorsed Apprentice Trails Guide course, or during Wilderness or Backpacking Trails in areas where free-roaming dangerous game occur.
- Log a minimum of 10 encounters from at least three of the animal categories as observer on a trail led by a FGASA Professional Trails Guide, or SKS (DG) Guide. This can be in the workplace during guiding based activities, during a FGASA endorsed Apprentice Trails Guide course, or during Wilderness or Backpacking Trails in areas where free-roaming dangerous game occur.

Mentor Approval process

After the 50 hours as an observer participating in trails, the candidate needs to contact an approved Mentor¹ and arrange the 10-hour one-on-one mentored assessment to ascertain whether the guide is ready to continue.

Training Providers could include this as part of the Apprentice Trails Guide course.

The applicant must be mentored and coached one-on-one, over a minimum of 10 hours by the mentor to evaluate the applicant's suitability to enter the programme. This must include:

- 1st and 2nd Rifle brief and de-brief
- Dry fire rifle exercises with both rifles using the "Three Command System" (refer to this section below)
- Roles of the 1st and 2nd Rifle
- Situational awareness
- Procedure to carry and handle a rifle whilst walking

Once the mentor endorses the applicant, this will be recorded in the applicant's logbook by the mentor. The Mentorship Form is then signed by the mentor and sent to the FGASA office for recording on the Apprentice Trails Guides profile.

FGASA will notify the applicant of acceptance into the Apprentice Trails Guide Programme

- Firstly, the Apprentice in the program logs the following experience:
 - ❖ As Apprentice Trails Guide log a minimum of 50 hours on trails as 2nd Rifle led by the mentor¹ and 50 hours as 1st Rifle with the mentor as 2nd Rifle. The mentor functions as back-up and is the responsible guide in charge of the trail. This can be in the workplace during guiding based activities, during a FGASA endorsed course, or during Wilderness or Backpacking Trails in areas where free-roaming dangerous game occur. The Apprentice Trails Guide can accumulate some or all these hours while acting as 2nd and 1st rifle on trails where other candidates (who are not yet in the apprentice program) are accumulating their observer hours.
 - ❖ As Apprentice Trails Guide log a minimum of 40 encounters with at least one encounter from each of the animal categories during the minimum of 100 hours as 2nd Rifle or 1st Rifle on trails.
- Secondly
 - ❖ As Apprentice Trails Guide, log a minimum of 50 hours on trails as 1st Rifle with an approved FGASA Professional Trails Guide or SKS (DG) Guide as 2nd Rifle. (The 2nd Rifle functions as back-up and is the responsible guide in charge of the trail). This must be in the workplace during guiding based activities with regular walking guests to the lodge/reserve on the walk/trail and may not be in a training context.

¹ An approved Mentor is a Professional Trails Guide or SKS (DG) Guide who is currently endorsed by FGASA Management and the FGASA SKS (DG) Standards Committee as a Mentor and Assessor

The workplace can be :

- The lodge or reserve where the guide is working
 - At any other operation offering walks where the guide is a freelance or volunteer, as long as it is not a training context or situation where students are guests
- ❖ Log a minimum of 10 encounters from at least three of the animal categories as 1st Rifle on trails with an approved FGASA Professional Trails Guide or SKS (DG) Guide as 2nd Rifle. The 2nd Rifle functions as back-up and is the responsible guide in charge of the trail. This must be in the workplace during guiding based activities with regular walking guests to the lodge/reserve on the walk/trail and may **not** be in a training context
- Finally complete a FGASA VPDA (View Potentially Dangerous Animals) Practical Assessment. This is conducted by an approved assessor² and is a multi-day walk spanning over a minimum of two full days (two morning and two afternoon walks) and a minimum of 10 hours on foot and must include at least two encounters with at least two different dangerous game categories. At least four categories of free-roaming dangerous game must be present in the area where the assessment takes place and the candidate must be assessed in the roles of both 1st and 2nd rifle with walking guests³
 - The Apprentice Trails Guide now holds a VPDA qualification.
 Note: If the Apprentice Trails Guide already holds a full FGASA NQF4 Field Guide Certificate **and** Tracker 1 Certificate, then the Apprentice Trails Guide becomes a FGASA Trails Guide. Refer to FGASA Trails Guide Section

² An approved Assessor is a Professional Trails Guide or SKS (DG) Guide who is currently endorsed by FGASA Management and FGASA SKS (DG) Standards Committee as a Mentor and Assessor

³ Walking guests can be regular paying guests at the reserve or lodge OR non-guiding staff OR special guests for example bed-nights who are prepared to walk the required hours with the guides. The guide can change the groups of guests.

THREE COMMAND SYSTEM

The commands are to be delivered by the Lead Trails Guide (1st rifle) only and are as follows:

Hold!

Confirmation that the Lead Trails Guide has decided **not** to take any further actions at this point in time. This is valuable as it eliminates any doubt as to what action the 2nd Rifle should be taking and confirms leadership by order of executing a predetermined plan.

This command may be used while an animal is approaching the group out of curiosity, approaching the group with the intent to confront or is performing a warning charge.

Warning!

The 1st Rifle Guide does not deliver a warning shot. Should a warning shot be ineffective the 1st Rifle Guide would have wasted valuable time (space) and increased the likelihood of a rifle malfunction while reloading a second cartridge. Therefore, the warning shot should be taken by the 2nd Rifle Guide upon the command provided by the 1st Rifle Guide.

The warning shot should be placed off to one side of the animal (not directly in line with animal) and into the ground approximately three quarters the distance to the animal. The warning shot would therefore not only provide the loud audio disturbance, but an additional visual disturbance (puff of dust) as the bullet hits the ground. The warning shot placement is ultimately dependent on terrain.

Warning shots have been effective in some cases, but is often not enough to deter the animal from a determined confrontation or charge. Should the warning shot be ineffective, the 1st Rifle Guide will be ready to provide the next command.

Fire!

This command may be delivered in two ways. First, a shot fired by the 1st Rifle Guide. This will always be a kill shot (aiming for the animal's brain). The 2nd Rifle Guide should follow up by shooting at the animal's brain as soon as the 1st Rifle Guides shot is heard.

The second and alternative command to the shot fired from the 1st Rifle Guide will be the verbal command "**fire**" from the 1st Rifle Guide. This verbal command may be necessary if the 1st Rifle Guide is experiencing a rifle malfunction or is not in a position to place a brain shot. Once the verbal command has been delivered, the 2nd Rifle Guide takes over the responsibility of the situation until the animal is declared dead by means of checking corneal reflex.

It is the responsibility of the Trail Guides to kill the animal once either of the "fire" commands have been delivered. Should the shots not be accurate and the animal turns to run away, an anchor shot will be necessary to halt the animal and then neutralize it. It is unethical to let that particular wounded animal run away.

Thankfully, Trail Guides conduct their duties in, what can be considered as, a very forgiving environment. The last thing any Trails Guide would like to do is to kill an animal to protect the participants from serious injury or death. However, the more time Trail Guides spend out in the field, the more likely it is that they will require the implementation of the 'three-command' system.

FGASA TRAILS GUIDE

The FGASA Trails Guide is an individual who is qualified to function as 1st and 2nd Rifle on trails or walks in areas where free-roaming dangerous game occur.

How to qualify

To qualify as a FGASA Trails Guide the candidate must successfully complete:

- The Apprentice Trails Guide Programme, including the FGASA VPDA (View Potentially Dangerous Animal) Practical Assessment
- Have a valid Basic (US119567) or Intermediate (US120496) First Aid Certificate
- Comply to all legal requirements (CATHSSETA & NDT) as well as all FGASA requirements
- Have a valid FGASA Advanced Rifle Handling
- Tracker Level I Certificate
- The FGASA Field Guide NQF4, or Professional Field Guide Certificate.

FGASA PROFESSIONAL TRAILS GUIDE

The FGASA Professional Trails Guide is an individual who is a qualified to function as 1st and 2nd Rifle on trails or walks in areas where free-roaming dangerous game occur.

- The Professional Trails Guide can mentor Apprentice Trails Guides and Trails Guides if all Mentor criteria are met and the candidate is approved by the FGASA SKS (DG) Standards Committee and FGASA Management
- The Professional Trails Guide can assess Apprentice Trails Guides and Trails Guides if all Assessor criteria are met and the candidate is approved by the FGASA SKS (DG) Standards Committee and FGASA Management
- The Professional Trails Guide can train Apprentice Trails Guides and Trails Guides if all Trainer criteria are met and the candidate is approved by the FGASA SKS (DG) Standards Committee and FGASA Management

How to qualify

To qualify as a FGASA Professional Trails Guide the candidate must successfully complete:

- The FGASA Professional Field Guide Certificate.
- Have a valid Basic (US119567) or Intermediate (US120496) First Aid Certificate
- Comply to all legal requirements (CATHSSETA & NDT) as well as all FGASA requirements
- The FGASA Trails Guide Certificate
- Have a valid FGASA Advanced Rifle Handling
- Tracker Level II Certificate
- Log a minimum of 600 hours on trails as 1st or 2nd Rifle. At least 500 hours must be in the workplace during guiding based activities with regular walking guests in areas where free-roaming dangerous game occurs.

- A maximum of 100 hours can be non-guiding activities e.g. rhino monitoring, security on tracking assessments, or as a participant on a FGASA approved Wilderness, Primitive or Backpacking Trails specifically designed to mentor Trails Guides, etc.
- Log a minimum of 300 encounters with at least ten encounters from each of the animal categories. At least 270 encounters must be in the workplace during guiding based activities.
- A maximum of 30 encounters can be non-guiding activities e.g. rhino monitoring, security on tracking assessments, or as a participant on a FGASA approved Wilderness, Primitive or Backpacking Trail specifically designed to mentor Trails Guides, etc.
This is to accommodate individuals working in areas where not all the animal categories occur.

FGASA SKS (DG) GUIDE

The FGASA SKS (DG) Guide is an individual who is qualified to function as 2nd or 1st Rifle on trails or walks in areas where free-roaming dangerous game occur.

- The SKS (DG) Guide can mentor Apprentice Trails Guides, Trails Guides, Professional Trails Guides and potential SKS (DG) Guides if all Mentor criteria are met and the candidate is approved by the FGASA SKS (DG) Standards Committee and FGASA Management
- The SKS (DG) Guide can assess Apprentice Trails Guides, Trails Guides, Professional Trails Guides and potential SKS (DG) Guides if all Assessor criteria are met and the candidate is approved by the FGASA SKS (DG) Standards Committee and FGASA Management
- The SKS (DG) Guide can train Apprentice Trails Guides, Trails Guides, Professional Trails Guides and potential SKS (DG) Guides if all Trainer criteria are met and the candidate is approved by the FGASA SKS (DG) Standards Committee and FGASA Management
- The SKS (DG) Guide Assessor can also serve on the SKS (DG) Standards Committee

How to qualify

To qualify as a FGASA SKS (DG) Guide the candidate must first successfully complete:

- The FGASA Professional Field Guide Certificate
- SKS (DG) theory exam
- Have a valid Level 2 Wilderness First Aid Certificate
- Comply to all legal requirements (CATHSSETA & NDT) as well as all FGASA requirements
- The FGASA Professional Trails Guide Certificate
- Have a valid FGASA Advanced Rifle Handling
- Tracker Level III Certificate

- Log a minimum of 1200 hours on trails as 1st or 2nd Rifle in the workplace during guiding based activities with regular walking guests in areas where free-roaming dangerous game occurs. Professional Trails Guide Trainers can log hours and encounters whilst guiding/mentoring/training students
- Must have guided or participated for at least 200 hours on backpack/primitive style trails in dangerous game areas
- A maximum of 100 hours can be non-guiding activities e.g. rhino monitoring, security on tracking assessments, or as a participant on a FGASA approved Wilderness, Primitive or Backpacking Trail specifically designed to mentor Trails Guides, etc.
- Log a minimum of 600 encounters with at least 30 encounters from each of the animal categories and must include all seven species. This must be in the workplace during guiding based activities
- A maximum of 100 encounters can be non-guiding activities e.g. rhino monitoring, security on tracking assessments, or as a participant on a FGASA approved Wilderness, Primitive or Backpacking Trail specifically designed to mentor Trails Guides, etc.
- A minimum of 100 hours (of the 600) must be mentored hours
- A minimum of five different mentors must be involved during the 100 hours
- Three of the five mentors must be SKS (DG) Assessors
- Must have completed the FGASA SKS (DG) workbook
- FGASA SKS (DG) shooting assessment (this can be done once the candidate has qualified as Professional Trails Guide)
- FGASA SKS (DG) practical assessment
 - This is a multi-day backpacking/primitive trail in a dangerous game area where all the different dangerous game categories occur.
 - Minimum number of candidates is two to allow for peer review.
 - It is conducted by an External Assessor and one Assessor if only two candidates, or an External Assessor plus two Assessors when more than two candidates are on the assessment.
 - Each candidate must be assessed as 1st Rifle for at least 1½ days (including 1 night) and as 2nd Rifle for at least 1½ days (including 1 night). Therefore the duration will slide as the minimum two candidates will take 3 full days and 2 nights, three or four candidates will take 6 full days and 5 nights.
 - It must include a minimum of two encounters as 1st Rifle.

Dangerous game categories:

- Elephant bull
- Elephant breeding herd
- Buffalo bull
- Buffalo breeding herd
- Lion & leopard
- White & black rhino
- Hippopotamus

An ENCOUNTER is one of the following:

View the animal and move away leaving the animal as it was found. Obviously if circumstances change and the animal becomes aware of the approaching humans then the required action should be taken to ensure the safety of all.

The logged experience required must include walking without initially knowing the exact location of a dangerous animal, possibly tracking of the animal in question, approaching the animal taking into consideration all the environmental and client factors with safety in mind at all times.

The experience on foot cannot be carried out by driving a vehicle to a potentially dangerous animal and then getting out of the vehicle to approach this particular animal on foot.

It is important to understand that an “encounter” involves the practical learning opportunity for the guide.

To be able to log the encounter:

the guide needs to respond to the animal because of the animal’s behaviour and not the lack of behaviour

AND

the animal cannot be too far away where there is no need to react in a careful manner OR a reaction from the animal (animal might or might not be aware of the position of the trail group) which requires the guide to respond (e.g. charging or threatening behaviour from the animal, or an animal which is moving in the direction of the trail group because it became aware of something or because that is the available escape route for the animal) OR

a chance (unintentional) contact at very close quarters with an animal unaware of the trail group but which requires extreme caution and readiness from the guides to extract the trail group from the area and ensure the safety of man and beast (e.g. a sleeping buffalo at 5 or 6 metres).

Sightings of dangerous game on foot outside the above criteria are regarded as “sightings” and do not contribute to the required number of encounters.

Logging hours

Backpack trails – Guide can log 15 hours per 24-hour day whilst guiding

Sleep-out Trails – Guide can log 18 hours per 24-hour day whilst guiding

Trails or walks from a base camp, lodge, vehicle etc – Guide must log actual hours on foot

ARH ASSESSOR REQUIREMENTS

Minimum qualifications for an ARH Assessor:

Professional Trails Guide and Professional Field Guide

ETDP Certificate (Conduct assessments)

Range Officer Course Certificate

Attendance and competence for the FGASA ARH Assessor Workshop (current)

Assessed shooting the new ARH Protocols – practical by SKS (DG) Assessor

Practical Assessors Assessment (Mentored Assessment)

All ARH Assessors who meet the above criteria need to shoot the ARH with a SKS (DG) Assessor with every renewal

How do ARH assessors stay current?

Every 3 years renewal of ARH with an SKS (DG) Assessor

Assess the assessor practical by SKS (DG) Assessor:

Renewal – You need to be assessed, whilst assessing one candidate

New Assessor – You need to be assessed, whilst assessing 5 candidates

Peer review – join an assessment once in a three-year cycle – (log this)

A minimum of 5 assessments needs to be carried out in a 3-year cycle for an assessor to stay current.

TRAILS GUIDE ASSESSOR REQUIREMENTS

Minimum qualifications for a Trails Guide Assessor:

- Professional Trails Guide and Professional Field Guide
- ETDP Certificate (Conduct assessments)
- Practical Assessors Assessment (Mentored Assessment)
- Must have been a Professional Trails Guide Mentor for two years and must have mentored a minimum of 10 Apprentices
- Must be signed off by FGASA Management and SKS (DG) Standards Committee before appointment as assessor
- A minimum of 5 assessments needs to be carried out in a 3-year cycle for an assessor to stay current.

FGASA TRAINING PROVIDER TRAINERS

- All FGASA Apprentice Trails Guide trainers must be Professional Trails Guides
- Must be a minimum 25 years of age
- Must have been a Professional Field Guide for two years
- **Initial implementation phase:** There was a 2-year grace period from 2019 to obtain this level. Each individual trainer (currently FGASA Field Guide [NQF4]) was given 2 years (ending Dec 2021) to get FGASA Professional Field Guide status. If that FGASA Field Guide trainer leaves a particular training provider, he/she cannot be employed by another Training provider unless s/he has attained the FGASA Professional Field Guide status.

Training Providers need to submit names of their FGASA Field Guide trainers who are to get a Professional Guide qualification to FGASA Management within the 2 years. This qualification must be obtained while still employed by the current Training Provider.

Training Provider (Company) Requirements for the Training of Apprentice Trails Guides

1. Manuals
2. Audio-visual aids (videos and DVDs)
3. Workbooks
4. Minimum training methodology per guidelines
5. Rifles
 - Airsoft bolt action rifle for training, unlimited rounds – optional
 - .22 rifle
 - .30 cal rifle (.308, .30-06, .303)
 - Large calibre rifle (.375 and up)
 - a minimum of 120 cartridges (various calibres) per student must be fired prior to assessment (these cartridges/rifles must be available from a FGASA endorsed Trails Guide Training Provider and cannot include the PFTC training for basic proficiency)
6. Charge box (as per specifications set by FGASA)
7. Targets (Specified by FGASA)
8. Cleaning kits
9. All other equipment as specified in the ARH Protocol

Set number of days of training

- ARH Training and Assessment – 10 days minimum
- Apprentice Trails Guide course – 28 days minimum (ARH included)

Components of ARH and Apprentice Trails Guide training can be mixed during the 28 days. The course can also be split into more than one continuance session.

Attendance Certificates

Training Providers may issue in-house or attendance certificates displaying the FGASA logo to candidates on an Apprentice Trails Guide course clearly stating “Apprentice Trails Guide”. An Attendance certificate is not a qualification and the design and text must reflect same. Training providers who want to be endorsed for this course going forward have 1 year to conform from January 2020.

TRAILS GUIDE MENTOR CRITERIA

- Must be a member in good standing
- Must be a Professional Trails Guide with at least three years' experience in the workplace
- A potential new mentor must be nominated (in writing to FGASA Management) by at least three mentors
- The potential new mentor must attend a training session.
- The potential new mentor must provide FGASA Management and SKS (DG) Standards Committee with a comprehensive CV and if needed, attend an interview with the FGASA Management and SKS (DG) Standards Committee
- The SKS (DG) Standards Committee and FGASA Management must agree that the individual is suitable to be a mentor before he/she can be appointed.

SKS (DG) TRAILS GUIDE MENTOR and ASSESSOR CRITERIA

Newly qualified SKS (DG) Guides can be mentors for new candidates working towards their own SKS (DG) assessment.

- Once qualified, SKS (DG) can apply to be a mentor
- Mentor applicant may then be invited to be a mentor
- New mentor listed on the FGASA list of mentors
- Carry out mentoring and when selected to become an SKS (DG) assessor will go through a peer review and then signed off as an SKS (DG) assessor
- SKS (DG) Assessors – An appointed **External Assessor** – total outsider with an objective view (Two local assessors and one external assessor for the SKS (DG) Assessments)
- The SKS (DG) guide must do the new shoot if they have only done the old shoot in the past to be considered as an SKS (DG) Assessor.
- Mentor to attend 2 shoots and 2 bush phase assessments – Get signed off as assessors by this committee.
- Provide feedback from those who have been mentored – to be signed off as assessors by this committee.
- Compulsory attendance at workshops in order to maintain assessor status.