How to become a Scrum Master: skills, experience and certifications

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Many Scrum Masters did not start as Scrum Masters. They began as developers, testers, analysts, project managers or support leads who found they enjoyed helping a team work better. The path is less about a certificate and more about showing you can facilitate, coach and remove obstacles.

TL;DR The short version

- Many Scrum Masters start as developers, testers, analysts or project managers who enjoy helping teams work better.
- Learn the framework from the Scrum Guide, then gain experience by facilitating retrospectives and chasing impediments.
- The path depends more on showing facilitation and coaching than on a certificate.

Read online, listen to it, or change the text size: https://blogs.iictp.org/how-to-become-a-scrum-master

Learn the framework properly

Read the Scrum Guide itself; it is short and free at scrumguides.org. Many misunderstandings come from second-hand descriptions. Then read about the practices teams add around it, such as story points and Kanban, and note which are part of Scrum and which are not.

Get experience before the title

- Volunteer to facilitate your team's Retrospective. See sprint retrospective ideas.
- Take ownership of an impediment nobody is chasing and see it through.
- Help the Product Owner split large stories.
- Run a Sprint Review where stakeholders actually give feedback.
- Write down what you tried and what changed. That record is your evidence in an interview.

Skills to build

- Facilitation and conflict handling.
- Coaching through questions rather than answers.
- Reading team data such as cycle time and carry-over without turning it into targets. See velocity and burndown charts.
- Enough technical literacy to understand CI/CD, testing and technical debt. See technical debt.

About certifications

Several organisations offer Scrum Master certifications, including Scrum Alliance and Scrum.org. Their formats, requirements and costs differ and change over time, so compare them on each organisation's own site. A certificate helps you get past a CV filter; interviews are won on the experience you can describe. Note too the difference between a certification and a certificate.

Where to go next

Experienced Scrum Masters often move into agile coaching, delivery management or engineering management. If your work spans agile delivery in technical teams, the IICTP Agile Delivery Practitioner credential tests that judgement. Prepare for the interview with Scrum Master interview questions.

> Related credential: Agile Delivery Practitioner. Explore the exam facts and syllabus.

Sources and further reading

1. Schwaber, K. and Sutherland, J. (2020). The Scrum Guide. scrumguides.org.
2. Scrum Alliance. scrumalliance.org.
3. Scrum.org. scrum.org.

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