CHAPTER

13

Certificates

A certificate is RacingOwl's way of recording that a learner finished one of your courses. This chapter explains exactly when one is issued, the one switch that controls it, what is printed on it, how you choose its design, how your learners download it and share it, and how anyone can check that it is genuine. By the end you will have set the switch on each course, picked a design and seen a sample with your own logo on it.

WHERE	TIME NEEDED	BEFORE YOU START	PLAN
The switch: a course's **Details** tab. The design: **Manage → This site → Settings → Certificate template**	About 5 minutes, once	Your logo uploaded under Settings, and your site name as you want it printed	Every plan

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How a certificate is earned

You never issue a certificate by hand, and a learner cannot ask for one. RacingOwl issues it automatically, at one precise moment: when a learner's enrolment on a course changes from "in progress" to "completed", and the course's certificate switch is on.

A learner has completed a course when both of these are true:

- **Every lesson is marked done.** The learner presses **Mark as done** on each lesson as they go. An assignment is a lesson too, so it counts in the total like any other. A required assignment is only ticked off when you mark it.
- **Every quiz set as "must be passed to complete the course" has been passed.** Practice quizzes that are not required do not hold anyone back. If a required quiz contains a written answer, the learner's attempt waits under **Manage → Marking**, and nothing moves until you score it. The moment your mark passes them, completion is settled in exactly the same way as a quiz marked by the computer.

A few details follow from that rule:

- A lesson held back by a release rule (so many days after enrolling, or a date) still counts in the total. A learner cannot finish the course, or earn its certificate, until that lesson opens and they mark it done.
- A course with no lessons can never complete, so it can never issue a certificate.
- A certificate is issued once per learner per course. If a learner un-ticks a lesson and ticks it again, the course reopens and completes again, but no second certificate is made. The learner keeps the one certificate, with its original code.
- If you reopen an assignment for another try after the course was completed, the course reopens, but the certificate already issued stays.

> **TIP.**
> Decide which quiz is the real assessment and make only that one required. The help card beside the quiz setting says it well: leave it on for the assessment that earns the certificate, and switch it off for practice checks along the way.

When a learner completes a course, you hear about it too. Every admin and instructor on your site gets a notification in the bell saying who finished which course, and the morning summary email lists finishers by name (see Notifications and keeping your site safe). Your dashboard has a **Certificates** figure for the period you choose. If some learners who enrolled in that period have completed a course without receiving a certificate (usually because that course's switch is off), a small line under the figure says how many, for example "2 finished without one". It is only shown when the number is not zero, so it is worth a look when it appears.

The switch: does this course award a certificate?

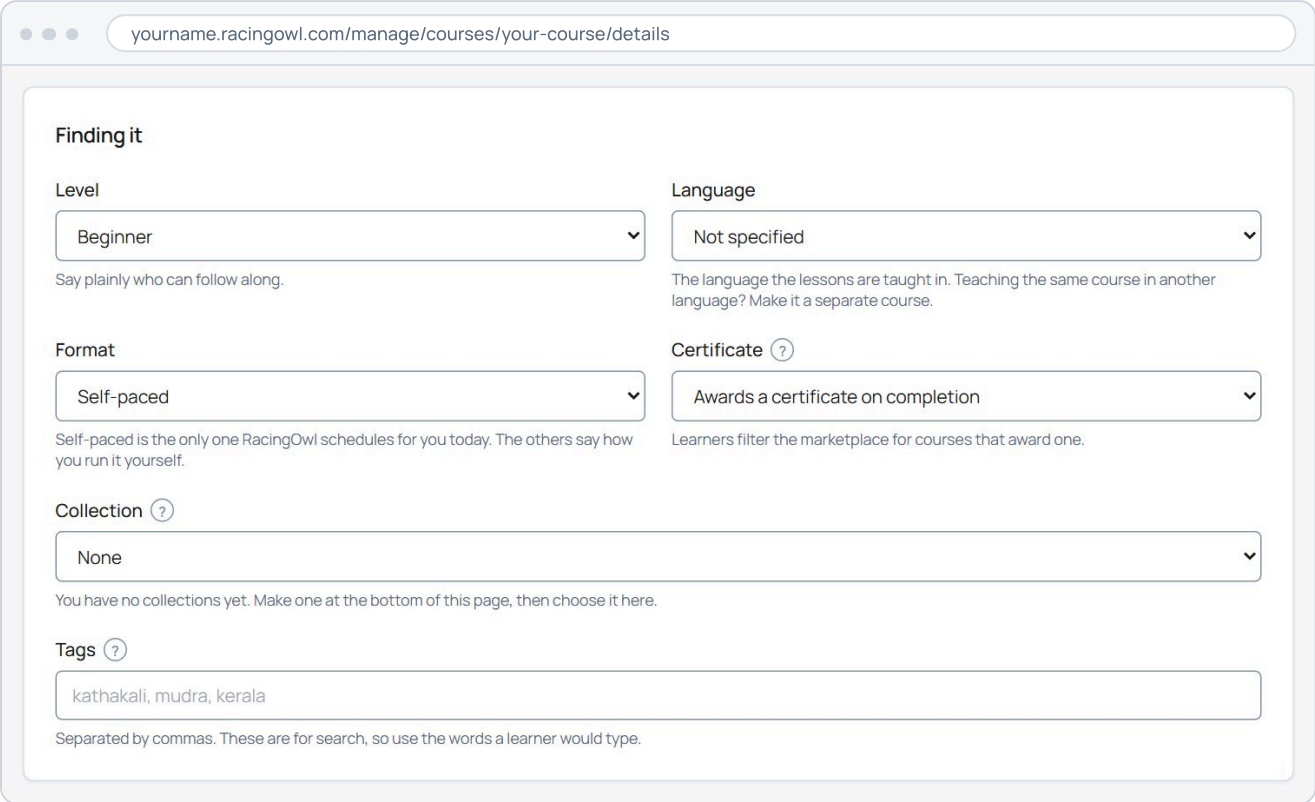
There is exactly one switch, and it belongs to each course. There is no site-wide setting: you can award certificates on your main courses and not on a short free taster.

1. **Open the course.** Go to **Manage → My courses** and open the course you want.

2. **Go to the Details tab.** The course editor has four tabs; the certificate setting is on **Details**, near the level and format.

3. **Find the Certificate box.** It is a drop-down labelled **Certificate** with two choices: **Awards a certificate on completion** and **No certificate**. The hint under it reads "Learners filter the marketplace for courses that award one."

4. **Choose, then save.** Pick the option you want and press **Save details** at the foot of the tab.



The Certificate setting on a course's Details tab, set to "Awards a certificate on completion".

Every new course starts with **Awards a certificate on completion** already chosen. You only need to visit this box if you want to switch it off.

What the switch changes

Where	With the switch on	With the switch off
Completion	A certificate is issued the moment the learner completes	The course still completes, but no certificate is issued
Your course page	The course facts include **Certificate on completion**	That line is not shown
The marketplace card	The card lists **Certificate**	Not listed
The marketplace filter	The course appears when a learner filters **Certificate offered** for Yes	It appears under No

Where	With the switch on	With the switch off
The "you finished" email	Carries the certificate as a PDF and its code	Congratulates the learner without a certificate

Changing your mind later

Certificates are issued only at the moment of completion, so the switch looks forwards, never backwards:

- **Switching it on later** does not issue certificates to learners who have already finished. Only learners who complete from now on receive one.
- **Switching it off later** never withdraws a certificate already issued. It stays valid, downloadable and checkable.

> **IMPORTANT.**
> If you want past finishers to have a certificate, leave the switch on from the day you publish. There is no button to issue one afterwards for somebody who has already completed.

What is printed on the certificate

Every certificate is an A4 landscape PDF. The border and artwork come from the design you choose (below); the words are the same on every design and are always centred in the empty middle of the page.

Line	What it says	Where it comes from
Heading	CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION	Fixed
Introduction	This certifies that	Fixed
Name	The learner's name	The learner's name on your site at the moment they completed. If they had no name set, their email address is printed instead of a blank
Link line	has successfully completed	Fixed
Course	The course title	The course title at the moment they completed
Issued	Issued by *your site's name* on *the date*	Your site's name as it is now, and the completion date
Taught by	Taught by *the instructor's name*	The name on the course instructor's profile, as it is now. Left out if there is no name
Code	Certificate No: RO-XXXX-XXXX-XXXX	A unique code made at issue
Footer	Verify this certificate at racingowl.com/verify	Fixed
Logo	Your logo, in a box in the top-left corner	Your site's logo as it is now

A few things worth knowing about the layout:

- **Long lines are shortened, not squeezed.** A very long name, course title or site name is cut with an ellipsis (…) so it fits the line. The date and the fixed words are never cut. If your site name is long, look at a sample to check it reads well.
- **The logo box is wide and short.** Your logo is scaled to fit a small landscape box and is never enlarged beyond its own size. A wide logo fills it well; a tall, square badge prints quite small. PNG, JPEG and WebP logos all print.
- **The design's colours are fixed.** Your site's accent and button colours do not recolour the certificate. Choose the design whose colours suit you.
- **Names are tidied for display.** A name typed all in capitals or all in small letters is printed in ordinary capitalisation.

Which parts can change after it is issued

A certificate is not stored as a file. RacingOwl keeps a record (the learner's name, the course title, the date and the code) and draws the PDF fresh every time somebody downloads it. That is why some parts are frozen and others follow your current settings.

You change...	Certificates already issued
The course title	Keep the title the course had when the learner finished
The learner changes their name	Keep the name they had when they finished
Your site's name	Show the new name on the next download
Your logo	Show the new logo on the next download
The instructor's name on their profile	Show the new name on the next download
The certificate design	Come out in the new design on the next download

The one copy that never changes is the PDF already attached to a learner's completion email. It was drawn once, when the email was sent, and keeps the design, name and logo it was sent with.

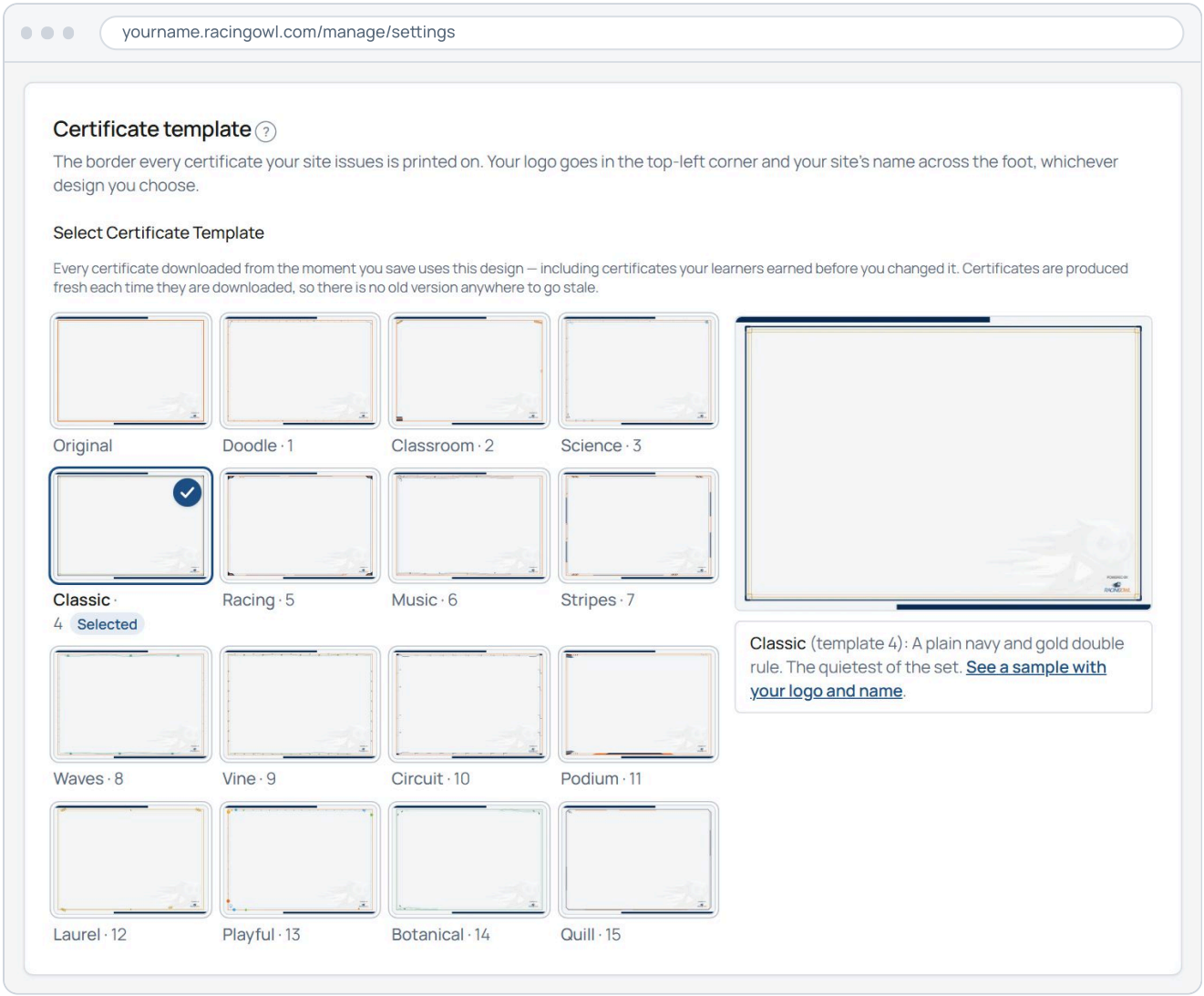
Choosing the design

You choose one design for your whole site. It applies to every course that awards a certificate.

1. **Open Settings.** Go to **Manage → This site → Settings** and scroll to the card headed **Certificate template**. The "?" beside the heading opens a short explanation.
2. **Look at the preview.** Under **Select Certificate Template** you see sixteen thumbnails. The design currently chosen has a tick in its corner and a **Selected** tag under its name. Beside the grid (above it on a phone) is a large preview of that design: a sample certificate with your own logo and site name on it.
3. **Click the thumbnails.** Clicking a thumbnail moves the tick and changes the large preview, with a one-line description of the design under it. Nothing is saved yet.

4 **Open a full sample if you want.** Under the preview, **See a sample with your logo and name** opens the chosen design as a PDF in a new browser tab. It is exactly what a learner would download, with placeholder words: "Learner's full name", "Course title", "Instructor's name" and the placeholder code RO-XXXX-XXXX-XXXX. It uses the logo and site name you have already saved.

5 **Save.** Press **Save changes** at the foot of the Settings page. You see "Saved." and the design is in force at once.



The Certificate template card in Settings: the sixteen thumbnails, the chosen one ticked, and the large preview of the design with the link to a sample carrying your logo.



A sample certificate, opened from "See a sample with your logo and name".

The sixteen designs

The Original design comes first; the other fifteen are numbered 1 to 15 in the picker. Every design uses the same page size and the same layout of words.

Design	Number	What it looks like
Original	none	The first RacingOwl design: a navy band and an orange flourish
Doodle	1	An orange rule with a sketched blue line and small hand-drawn marks
Classroom	2	A pencil in the corner and a ruler down the side
Science	3	Molecules in one corner and a flask in the other, on a blue rule
Classic	4	A plain navy and gold double rule; the quietest of the set
Racing	5	Navy corner wedges with orange chevrons and a grey rail
Music	6	A stave with a clef and notes across the top and bottom
Stripes	7	Diagonal navy and orange stripes at the corners of a thin rule
Waves	8	Teal waves along the edges with leafy stars

Design	Number	What it looks like
Vine	9	A green vine with leaves running round the frame
Circuit	10	Circuit-board traces in navy and orange
Podium	11	A navy and blue speed wedge with an orange bar along the foot
Laurel	12	Gold ears of wheat on a gold rule
Playful	13	Coloured balloons and stars on a light blue rule, made for younger learners
Botanical	14	Green leaf sprigs at the corners of a green frame
Quill	15	A navy corner with pen strokes and a twin orange rule

What changing the design does

The change is immediate and complete. Because every certificate is drawn fresh at each download, a certificate a learner earned last month and downloads tomorrow comes back in the design you chose today. No old version is kept anywhere, so there is nothing to go out of date. Only the copy already attached to a completion email keeps the design it was sent in.

> **TIP.**
> Choose your design before your first learner finishes, and then leave it. Learners who download their certificate twice and get two different-looking documents may wonder which is real. Both would be, and both carry the same code, but a settled design saves the question.

> **IMPORTANT.**
> If your certificates come out without a logo, the logo file on record may be one uploaded long ago in a form that could not be printed. Upload your logo again under **Settings → Logo** and save; the next download will carry it.

What your learner receives

The "you finished" email

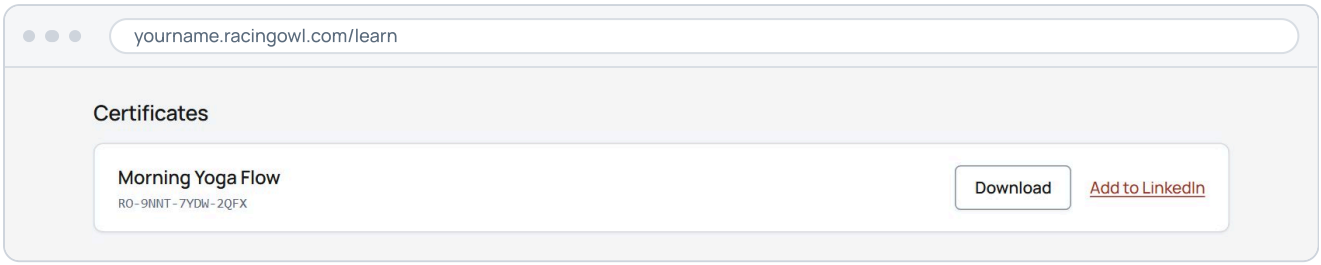
The moment a learner completes a course that awards a certificate, they are emailed "You finished *course title*", sent in your site's name. The certificate is attached as a PDF named after its code, for example `certificate-RO-4K7M-9P2T-XW3V.pdf`, and the email gives the code in the text. In the rare case that the PDF could not be drawn at that moment, the email still goes, with the code alone, and the learner downloads the certificate from My learning instead. Completion itself never fails because of the certificate.

My learning on your site

On your site, the learner's **My learning** page gains a **Certificates** section once they have at least one. Each certificate shows the course title and its code, with two actions:

- **Download** saves the PDF, drawn fresh in your current design.

- **Add to LinkedIn** opens LinkedIn's own "add a certification" form in a new tab, already filled in (see below).



The Certificates section on a learner's My learning page on your site, with Download and Add to LinkedIn.

All my learning on racingowl.com

A learner who studies with several trainers also sees every certificate from every site in one place: **racingowl.com → All my learning → Certificates**. Each one shows the course, your site's name, the instructor's name, the date it was earned and the code, with **Download PDF** and **Add to LinkedIn**. The download is always served by your site, so it always comes out in your design. If the learner is not signed in on your site at that moment, they pass through your site's sign-in page and come straight back to the download.

The learner's **Download history (CSV)** on their RacingOwl profile also lists, for each course, whether a certificate was issued and its code.

Add to LinkedIn

LinkedIn has its own form for adding a certification to a profile. **Add to LinkedIn** opens that form with these fields already filled in:

LinkedIn field	Filled with
Name	The course title
Issuing organisation	Your site's name
Issue date	The month and year the certificate was earned
Credential ID	The certificate's code
Credential URL	racingowl.com/verify/ followed by the code, so anyone reading the profile can check it

The learner reviews the form on LinkedIn and saves it there. RacingOwl never posts anything to LinkedIn itself and never sees the learner's LinkedIn account.

> **WHAT YOUR LEARNER SEES.**
> On the last lesson they mark done (or when your mark passes their final quiz), the course shows a Completed badge, the "you finished" email arrives with the PDF attached, and the certificate appears on My learning with Download and Add to LinkedIn. A learner does not need to do anything to "claim" it.

Checking a certificate: racingowl.com/verify

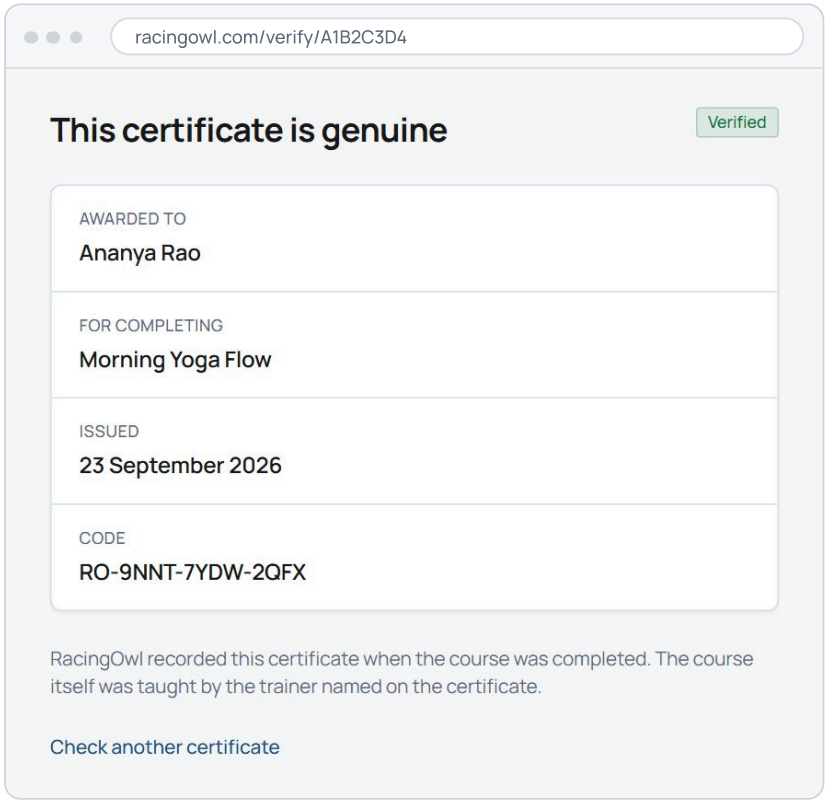
Every certificate carries a code such as **RO-4K7M-9P2T-XW3V** and the line "Verify this certificate at racingowl.com/verify". An employer, a parent or a college can check it there, with no account and no sign-in.

1. **Open the page.** Go to racingowl.com/verify. The page is headed **Check a certificate**.
2. **Type the code.** Enter it in the **Certificate code** box. Upper or lower case both work, with or without the dashes.
3. **Press Check it.**

If the code belongs to a real certificate, the page says **This certificate is genuine** with a **Verified** badge, and shows four facts only:

- **Awarded to**: the learner's name as recorded when they finished
- **For completing**: the course title as recorded when they finished
- **Issued**: the date
- **Code**: the code checked

Nothing else is shown: no email address, no account details and no link to the learner. If the code does not match any certificate, the page says **We could not find that certificate**, shows what was searched for, and explains that codes are printed at the bottom of the certificate and contain no letter I, L, O or U (those are the digits 1 and 0). A wrong letter is therefore the most common reason for a failed check.



The verify page confirming a genuine certificate.

Codes are long and random on purpose. Nobody can guess their way through the verify page to find out who studied what, and the page that shows a checked certificate is kept out of search engines.

What happens to a certificate when things change

A certificate, once issued, is the learner's record. RacingOwl has no "revoke" button, and none of these events takes a certificate away:

Event	The certificate
You refund a learner who had already completed the course	Stands. The enrolment stays completed and the certificate stays valid
You fully refund a learner who had not completed	There is none to keep; the course leaves their active list and can no longer earn one
The learner leaves your site	Stays valid and checkable by its code, like their receipts
The learner deletes their RacingOwl account	Stays, with the name printed on it, as the privacy policy says
A membership lapses	Unfinished courses opened through it close, but finished courses and their certificates stay
RacingOwl hides the course after a report	The learner is told that anything they earned on it, such as a certificate, is still theirs
You switch the course's certificate off	Stays valid
You archive or unpublish the course	Stays valid

If you believe a certificate was earned improperly, talk to the learner first, and write to RacingOwl through **Ask RacingOwl** if you need help.

What certificates do not cover

- **Only course completion earns one.** Joining a membership or attending a live class does not issue a certificate on its own. A live class can be part of a course, but the certificate comes from completing the course.
- **No uploaded artwork.** You choose from the sixteen designs; you cannot upload your own border or recolour a design.
- **No signature or seal.** The certificate carries your logo, your site's name, the instructor's name and a code anyone can check. The code is the proof.
- **No site-wide switch.** Each course decides for itself.

Common questions

Q A learner says they finished but got no certificate. Why?

Check three things. Is the course set to **Awards a certificate on completion**? Has every lesson been marked done, including any lesson held back by a release rule? Is there a required quiz still waiting for your marking under **Manage → Marking**? If the switch was off when they finished, switching it on now will not

issue one.

Q I changed the design. Will learners who already have a certificate get the new one?

Yes, the next time they download it. The PDF attached to their original completion email keeps the old design, because it was drawn when the email was sent.

Q A learner spelled their name wrongly and the certificate shows it. Can I fix it?

No. The name is fixed at the moment of completion, so it stays true to the record. Changing a name afterwards does not change a certificate already issued.

Q I renamed my course. Do old certificates change?

No. They keep the title the course had when each learner finished. Your site's name, logo and the instructor's name, on the other hand, are read fresh at every download.

Q My logo looks tiny on the certificate.

The logo box is wide and short, and a logo is never enlarged beyond its own size. A wide logo, or a larger file, prints better than a small square badge. Upload it, press **Save changes**, then open **See a sample with your logo and name** to check.

Q Can I preview a certificate before any learner earns one?

Yes. The large preview in **Settings → Certificate template** and the **See a sample with your logo and name** link both show your real logo and site name with placeholder words.

Q Someone emailed me asking whether a certificate is real. What do I tell them?

Send them to racingowl.com/verify with the code printed on the certificate. They need no account. If the page says the certificate is genuine, it is.

Q Can I take a certificate back?

No. There is no way to revoke a certificate, and a refund or a learner leaving does not remove one.

Q Does a certificate count against any plan limit?

No. Certificates are not stored as files, so they use none of your storage.

Related: Creating your first course, Branding your site, Managing your learners, Your instructor profile.

THE REST OF THE GUIDE

This is chapter 13 of 17 of the RacingOwl Trainer's Guide. The full guide, every other chapter as its own PDF, and the online version are at racingowl.com/trainer-guide. Stuck? Press **Ask RacingOwl** at the bottom right of any Manage page.