

What It Takes to Become a Master

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I was teaching a seminar in Ireland last year and while I was there with my wife, it was recommended that we take [a tour of the Waterford crystal factory](#). As lovers of fine crystal, we set out for the factory, which is actually the center of the company's worldwide operation.

The tour took us through each phase of process used to bring a piece of crystal to life, starting with the raw ingredients, all the way to how a handle was heated before being attached to a pitcher. What I found most interesting was the procedure used to create the crystal's intricate etching.

We were ushered into a room where a man explained what it took to become a master etcher. He explained that each engraver had to memorize more than 150 patterns, and if a mistake were made during the process, the piece was destroyed. Because each artisan was paid by the piece, only those that were perfect yielded a financial gain. Becoming a master etcher required 10 years of training and a certain percentage of perfect products.

He then showed us a Waterford golf trophy that had been presented to Tiger Woods following one of his U.S. Open wins and said that the craftsman who created this fine piece of art had passed his master's examination and then had to train 10 more years before being able to create such a difficult piece.

My time at Waterford made me think about the chiropractic profession. As chiropractors, we often move from technique to technique, without ever becoming an expert at just one method. Without consistent focus and direction, we may never master any one technique, and thus may only be moderately successful in our delivery of care.

I have said many times during lectures that students should select a primary technique and train on that technique until it is mastered. It takes years of continuing education and practice to truly master anything, whether it is a chiropractic technique or another area of interest, and we have to invest the time, energy and resources required. But becoming a master is so worthwhile, as having that expertise benefits us as doctors and better serves our patients as well. Like the ornate crystal created by a master etcher, chiropractors who master their chosen technique are admired by the masses and elevate our entire profession.

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