

How To Select a Personal Trainer

Why you should use a personal trainer

A personal trainer will help you reach your goals by designing safe and effective workout programs especially for you. A personal trainer is a source of motivation and encouragement, and a resource for the latest information on health and fitness. A personal trainer can help you fit exercise into your schedule and teach you how to make the most of your time.

Locating and choosing a personal trainer

Start by asking friends, colleagues and medical professionals for their recommendations. Call the NSCA and ask for a certified personal trainer in your area. Trainers may also be listed in your local phone directory under headings such as “Personal Trainers”, “Health Clubs”, and “Exercise and Physical Fitness”.

When you have located a few trainers, take the time to interview each of them to find one that best fits your needs, goals, and personality. Use the following checklist to help you with the interview.

Certification and Education:

- Is the personal trainer currently certified by a nationally recognized organization such as the National Strength & Conditioning Association? What was required in the certification process? What continuing education is required to renew the certification?
Certifications such as the *NSCA - Certified Personal Trainer® (NSCA-CPT®)*, and the *Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist® (CSCS®)* are nationally recognized certifications that follow stringent standards for continuing education and re-certification.
- Does the personal trainer have a degree in a health or fitness related field?
Trainers with an educational background in Exercise Physiology, Sports Medicine, Health and Wellness, Physical Education, or Anatomy and Physiology have a more thorough understanding of the way the different systems within the body work together, and how exercise affects each of these systems.
- If the trainer recommends a nutritional program, do they have any nutritional education?
- How does the trainer keep current on research in strength training and conditioning?
- Is the trainer CPR certified?
- Does the trainer have liability insurance?

Experience and References:

- How long have they been a personal trainer?
- What types of clients have they worked with?
- Can they provide a reference list of clients who have performed a similar type of exercise program?
- People use trainers for many different reasons and with different goals. Your trainer should have experience and success in working with others who have goals similar to yours. The trainer should provide you a list of present and former clients that can give you information to help determine if the trainer has the expertise to provide you with the workout you want.

Client Evaluation:

- Does the trainer perform a health screening, conduct testing, and evaluate your current fitness level?

A personal trainer should begin by learning about any past or current medical conditions; including injuries, pains, and cardiovascular conditions. The trainer may also conduct fitness tests to determine a safe and effective starting point for your training. In some cases, the trainer may ask for a medical release from your physician or may request to consult with your physician.

Resource Network:

- Does the trainer have a network of other health professionals such as physicians, physical therapists, nutrition specialists, and other fitness leaders?

A trainer should have sources for answering special questions, and for referrals outside their area of expertise.

Fees:

- What does the personal trainer charge?
- How long is each session?
- What services are included in the fee?
- Is there an additional “gym membership” fee?
- Are there package prices?

Personal trainer’s fees vary depending on the length of the session, location, and trainer’s experience. You can typically expect to pay between \$20 and \$100 an hour. Some trainers offer discounted fees for packages or prepaid sessions.

Scheduling and Cancellation Policies:

- Is the trainer available to meet your schedule?
- What is the cancellation policy? Will you be charged if you cancel or reschedule?

The trainer should provide you a written copy of all policies on billing, scheduling, and cancellations.

Personality & Gender:

- Would you prefer a male or female trainer?
- Do you get along with the trainer?
- Does the trainer communicate well and explain the exercises and methods to your understanding?
- Does the trainer listen to what you tell them about your body and the way exercises feel?
- Does the trainer motivate you?
- Is the trainer sensitive to your unique needs?

The trainer you choose must be a good fit for you. You should get along well, and be comfortable with your trainer. Your trainer should motivate you without intimidating you or pushing you beyond your limits. Your workout program should reflect that your trainer understands your limitations, needs, and goals.