

Personal Trainer

As a Personal Trainer, you will help people (known as clients) to get fitter and healthier by running training sessions for them. You will usually be based either at a gym or leisure centre, or you might visit clients at their home.

At a first meeting, you will talk about what the client wants to achieve. You'll then put together a training plan describing what type of exercise the client needs to do and how often. You'll run the sessions for the client showing them what to do and also motivating them to do it.

As a Trainer, you will usually write up notes after each session with a client.

To become a Personal Trainer, you need to be:

- physically fit
- good at explaining things clearly
- able to encourage and motivate
- good at problem solving

People often go into personal training after already working in the fitness industry.

A variety of personal training courses are available from a number of providers.

What are the Job Prospects?

Pay

Self-employed Personal Trainers earn around £20 - £40 for a one-hour session.

If you are employed, for example by a gym, you'd probably earn:

- Starting: £17,500
- With experience: £19,000 - £21,500

Hours of work


Working hours need to fit in with clients, so most Personal Trainers work in the evenings and at weekends as well as in the daytime.

Where could I work?

Most Personal Trainers are self-employed and run their own business. Personal Trainers find clients themselves (by advertising in the paper, for example) and work with them at home, or hire a hall or studio to run sessions in.

Alternatively, they might be based in a health club, gym, spa, holiday resort or cruise ship who help them find clients to work with.

Where are vacancies advertised?

Vacancies are advertised in local/national newspapers, on recruitment and employers' websites, and on Find a Job (www.gov.uk/jobsearch .

Social media websites, such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook, are a great way to network, find vacancies and get in contact with possible employers. Make sure that your profile presents you in a professional manner that will appeal to potential employers.

Take a look at our General Information Article 'Finding Work Online'.

What Skills are needed?

To become a Personal Trainer, you need to be:

- good at explaining things clearly
- able to encourage and motivate different sorts of people
- good at problem solving and coming up with new ideas

- flexible, for example, if a training plan isn't working out
- physically fit

You'd probably be self-employed, so you'll also need the skills to run your own business.

Entry Routes

Entry routes

You would normally start by getting experience in the fitness industry as a Coach, Fitness Instructor or Gym Trainer, for example.

You then need to get a relevant personal training qualification. The Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) has a list of approved training providers on their website.

You'll become self-employed and either advertise for clients yourself, or find them by being based in a gym, fitness centre or similar setting.

An Advanced Level Apprenticeship is also great place to start. You may be able to take an NVQ as part of your apprenticeship.

Training

If you would like some training, then BTEC offer a level 3 qualification in personal training. This course uses a mixture of mandatory and optional units which include:

- health, safety and welfare in a fitness environment
- principles of exercise, fitness and health
- know how to support clients who take part in exercise and physical activity
- anatomy and physiology for exercise and health
- programming personal training with clients
- delivering personal training sessions
- applying the principles of nutrition to a physical activity program

Other courses could be available in your area.

Work experience

Previous background in exercise and fitness activity would be useful for this career.

Progression

Attending workshops and short courses can help keep your skills up to date. Learning new techniques and gaining relevant qualifications can widen your potential client base.

Experienced Personal Trainers can move on to a level 4 instructor qualification.

Qualifications

Entry requirements for Personal Trainer courses vary. For some you need a relevant qualification, such as gym or fitness instruction. For others, you just require experience of using a gym.

You might also want to get qualifications specific to particular sports or fitness activities. There are various vocational qualifications available, including:

- BTEC level 2 - exercise and fitness instruction
- BTEC level 3 - personal training
- BTEC level 3 - sport development, coaching and fitness
- City & Guilds level 2 & 3 - exercise and fitness
- Cambridge Technical - sport and physical activity

Some Personal Trainers have a higher qualification, such as a relevant Higher National Diploma (HND), foundation degree or bachelor's degree.

To get onto an Advanced Level Apprenticeship, you'll usually need five GCSEs at grade C/4 or above, including English and maths, or to have completed an Intermediate Level Apprenticeship.

Work Activities

As a Personal Trainer, you will help people (known as clients) get fitter and healthier by running training sessions for them. People might want to get fit for various reasons:

- an illness or injury, such as diabetes or a bad back
- getting ready to run a marathon or go on a ski holiday
- trying to get fit after a sports injury
- wanting to lose weight before getting married

You might work at a gym or leisure centre, or visit clients in their home or where they work.

When you first meet a client, you'll talk to them and find out exactly what they want to get out of the training sessions. You will need to find out about the client's medical background, their diet and what exercise they already do.

Using this information, you'll create a plan that shows the client what activities they need to do to get fitter. A plan is written specifically for each client with activities they will enjoy and that are the right level of difficulty for them. The plan may cover days, weeks or months.

The training sessions usually last about an hour - you'll start with a warm up and then get the client to do exercises designed to improve their:

- strength – for example, using weights in the gym
- cardiovascular fitness – for example, running
- flexibility – for example, pilates or yoga

You'll write some notes after each session to keep a record of what the client has achieved. You might change the plan making it easier or harder depending on the client's progress.

You may also have to spend time on other administrative tasks, such as advertising your services or keeping track of clients' payments.

Being able to read, write and speak Welsh may be an advantage when you're looking for work in Wales.