

Fit Facts™

FROM THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EXERCISE®

HOW TO CHOOSE A PERSONAL TRAINER

CERTIFICATION IS THE FIRST THING TO LOOK FOR

A personal trainer should be certified because that's your assurance you're working with a trainer who has the knowledge to provide you with a safe and effective workout. Not just any certification will do. You want a personal trainer who has been certified by a nationally recognized certifying organization, like ACE, which happens to be the largest not-for-profit fitness-certifying organization in the world.

Certification is more than a piece of paper. For example, to qualify for ACE certification, a personal trainer has to pass an intensive three hour, 150-question exam and written simulation that covers exercise science and programming knowledge, including anatomy, kinesiology, health screening, basic nutrition and instructional methods.

After checking certification, there are a few other things you should take into consideration when hiring a personal trainer. Many require asking direct questions.

A CHECKLIST TO HELP YOU HIRE THE RIGHT PERSONAL TRAINER

Ask for references

Ask the trainer for the names and phone numbers of other clients with goals similar to yours. Call to see if they were pleased with their workouts, if the trainer was punctual and prepared, and if they felt their individual needs were addressed. The best personal trainer to hire is the one others give high marks to.

Make sure the trainer has liability insurance and provides business policies in writing

Many personal trainers operate as independent contractors and are not employees of a fitness facility. You should find out if the trainer you want to hire carries professional liability insurance.

A reputable personal trainer should also make sure you understand the cancellation policy and billing procedure. The best way to avoid confusion and to protect your rights is to have those policies in writing.



Look for a trainer who is able to assist you with your special needs

A personal trainer should always have you fill out a health history questionnaire to determine your needs or limitations. If you have a medical condition or a past injury, a personal trainer should design a session that takes these into account. If you're under a doctor's care, a personal trainer should discuss any exercise concerns with your doctor, and should ask for a health screening or release from your doctor.

Find out what the trainer charges

Rates vary, depending on the trainer's experience, and the length and location of the workout session. For example, a personal trainer who works in a fitness club will probably charge less per hour than one who works independently and needs to come to your home or office.

Decide if this is someone you can work with

Some people like to exercise in the morning, some in the evening. Will the personal trainer you're talking to accommodate your schedule? What about the trainer's gender? Some people do better working with a trainer of the same sex; others prefer the opposite sex.

The personal trainer you select should motivate you by positive, not negative, reinforcement. Even more important, that trainer should be someone you like.

Ask yourself if you think you could get along well with the trainer. Ask yourself, too, if you think the trainer is genuinely interested in helping you.

The personal trainer who best measures up is the one to hire. Because that's the professional who will help you get the best results.

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M **MONMOUTH**
FITNESS CLUB
165 E. Main Street
Monmouth, OR 97361
503-838-2951
www.monmouthfit.com

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