

PROSPECTS

Job profile

Personal trainer

Personal training offers you the chance to help others achieve their exercise goals and is an ideal career path for anyone who is passionate about keeping fit and healthy

A personal trainer creates one-on-one fitness programmes for their clients, motivating and guiding them to achieve their goals.

Clients may wish to lose weight or gain muscle, and as a personal trainer you'll teach and help them to exercise properly using workouts and specific plans. You'll instruct and advise your clients, using a range of fitness machines, classes or weights.

Similar roles include fitness instructors and gym instructors, but a personal trainer holds more fitness qualifications, meaning they're able to provide clients with tailored health and exercise advice. It's not uncommon for those new to the industry to train as a fitness or gym instructor first before qualifying as a personal trainer.

You'll generally work in a gym or a similar setting, but can take sessions outdoors or to other venues.

Responsibilities

As a personal trainer, your typical day could include:

- conducting fitness assessments to establish client fitness and skill level
- holding one-on-one or group sessions with your clients
- identifying goals and creating tailored exercise plans
- monitoring your clients' progress
- providing advice to your clients on health, nutrition and lifestyle changes
- educating and advising your clients to maintain or reach their fitness and health goals
- keeping up to date with the latest personal training techniques and best practise
- helping clients with their workouts
- creating and maintaining positive, professional and trusting relationships with your clients
- providing innovative and challenging exercises to keep clients engaged and motivated
- proactively seeking and providing feedback in a manner which suits each individual client
- assisting with membership retention strategies for existing clients
- accurately recording your clients' training sessions and tracking relevant paperwork
- communicating with clients in a professional and courteous manner
- acting as a positive role model for all of your clients
- making the best of the environment in which clients are exercising
- analysing information relating to individual clients
- marketing your business to increase your client base
- maintaining an online presence through your personal website, blogging and social media.

Salary

A large proportion, almost 80%, of personal trainers work freelance (self-employed) and are therefore usually paid by the hour for each session they undertake with a client. Freelance instructors could expect to earn between £20 and £40 an hour. This could be much higher, £50 to £100 per hour in some locations and if you're working with high profile clients.

For those employed by a gym or similar, you can expect to start on a salary somewhere between £14,000 and £16,000, rising to between £20,000 and £30,000 with experience.

Working hours

Working hours vary considerably and will depend on whether you're employed by a gym or if you're self-employed. You will need to be flexible in order to meet the needs of your clients, so will probably find that you'll be working in the evenings, early mornings and weekends. While you're building up your client base, it's not uncommon to work 12-hour days which will include working with existing clients while also trying to recruit new ones.

What to expect

- Personal training is definitely not a 9am-5pm office job. Where you work can be incredibly varied. This could include client's homes, a local gym, a park or even on a cruise ship or in a holiday resort.
- Personal trainers are often viewed as positive role models by their clients. It's therefore essential that you look after your own health and wellbeing in order to assist you in promoting a healthy lifestyle to others.
- Keeping up to date with developments in the fitness industry is essential as is the continuous development of your own skills, knowledge and qualifications. This will enable you to offer a varied service to your clients that is tailored to their individual needs.
- As a freelance or self-employed personal trainer you'll be expected to have public liability insurance.

Qualifications

To work as a personal trainer you'll need a level 3 personal training qualification, ideally one accredited by a reputable organisation such as the Register of Exercise Professionals (REPS) (<http://www.exerciseregister.org/>) or the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA) (<https://www.cimspa.co.uk/>). This can be gained during your degree studies or through an apprenticeship or training provider. In addition it's advisable, but not compulsory, for you to hold a relevant first aid qualification which ideally should include a cardio-pulmonary resuscitation certificate (CPR).

It's not necessary to have a foundation degree, HND or degree to be a personal trainer. However, if you do wish to undertake a higher education qualification, the most relevant subjects include:

- personal training
- fitness and personal training
- health and fitness management
- health, nutrition and exercise science
- sport science and personal training.

Skills

You will need to have:

- the ability to inspire your clients
- a friendly and outgoing personality
- excellent people skills to enable you to work with a wide range of individuals with different backgrounds and motivations
- a good understanding of the human body and nutrition
- a love of health and fitness
- excellent time keeping and organisational skills
- the ability to deliver a high level of customer care
- excellent oral communication skills
- awareness and understanding of safeguarding practice and policy
- high levels of enthusiasm and drive
- problem solving and stress management skills
- ability to use information technology for a range of purposes including record keeping, class scheduling, session reminders, sales and invoicing, client and group management and analysing your clients' progress.

Work experience

With growing numbers of people entering the fitness industry, it's advisable to get as much relevant work experience as possible. This will not only provide you with the opportunity to obtain a deeper knowledge and understanding of the industry but, it will also give you a chance to do some essential networking with other fitness professionals as well as getting your face seen by future potential clients.

Although it's possible to start a training course or apprenticeship to become a personal trainer with no prior relevant experience, many employers, as well as prospective clients, will expect you to have acquired relevant, active experience in the fitness sector.

Employers

As a personal trainer, there are a number of different types of employer you could work for. These include:

- leisure centres
- gyms and personal training studios
- health clubs
- hotels, resorts or spas
- cruise lines
- health care charities
- the armed forces
- self-employed or freelance work in a gym or client's home
- a large organisation which provides employees with workplace fitness facilities.

Look for vacancies at:

- All Cruise Jobs (<https://www.allcruisejobs.com/sport-fitness-jobs/2/>)
- LeisureJobs (<https://www.leisurejobs.com>)
- Leisure Opportunities (<http://www.leisureopportunities.co.uk/>)
- Leisure People (<https://www.leisurepeople.com/>)
- National Register of Personal Trainers (NRPT) (<http://www.nrpt.co.uk/>)

Professional development

The main route for progression in personal training is through either diversification or specialisation. There are a range of skills and options you could train in to offer to your clients. These include yoga, Pilates, nutrition, kettlebells, aerobics, pre and post-natal exercise, circuit training as well as exercise referrals.

Undertaking a course which provides membership of an accredited society such as REPS, CIMSPA or NRPT can aid your professional development. Some universities offer these accreditations as part of their degree or postgraduate courses.

PD:Portal (<https://pdphub.com/>) lists industry-recognised training and continuous professional development opportunities.

To find out more, there are a number of organisations who offer courses as well as careers advice. These include:

- The Register of Exercise Professionals (<http://www.exerciseregister.org/>)
- UK Active (<http://www.ukactive.com/>)
- CIMSPA (<https://www.cimspa.co.uk/>)

Career prospects

After you've qualified it's possible to start your own personal training business straight away, but many trainers choose work for an employer first and then branch out once they've gained a good client base.

According to the 2017 State of the UK Fitness Industry Report, the UK health and fitness industry has grown significantly in the past few years and is continuing to do so, with 2020 being potentially cited as 'the golden age of fitness'. This outlook is a reassuring one for anyone wishing to start their career as a personal trainer.

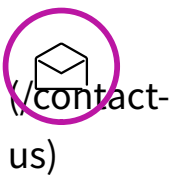
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Solent University · December 2017

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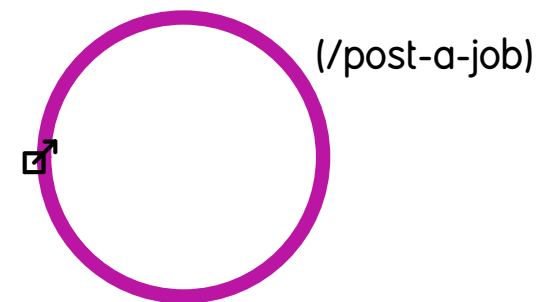
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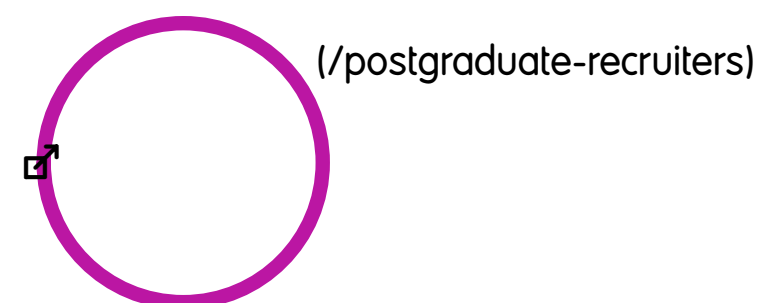
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