

# Fit Facts

American  
Council on  
Exercise

## HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT PERSONAL TRAINER

### An NCCA-accredited certification is the first thing to look for.

**A** personal trainer should hold a current NCCA-accredited certification. This will give you the assurance that you are working with a professional who has the knowledge and skills to provide you with a safe and effective workout.

The National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) has 26-years of experience accrediting allied health professions such as registered dietitians, nurses, athletic trainers, and occupational therapists. A fitness industry initiative launched in 2003 called for organizations offering personal trainer certifications to seek NCCA-accreditation of their certification exams in order to raise the standard of personal training and better serve and protect consumers. Currently, only 10 of nearly 70 certification agencies have achieved this recognition. All four certifications offered by the American Council on Exercise have earned NCCA-accreditation. For a complete list of the NCCA-accredited certification agencies, visit [www.noca.org](http://www.noca.org) and click on the NCCA link. Never be afraid to ask to see a copy of a personal trainer's certification to ensure that it is current. You can always contact a certification agency to verify a trainer's status. Most certification renewal periods run between 2-4 years and require that personal trainers take continuing education designed to keep them up-to-date on the latest information and training techniques.

After checking certification, there are a few other criteria you should consider when selecting a personal trainer.

### Work Experience And Area Of Specialization

Ask how many years of experience a personal trainer has working with clients, particularly those with your needs or limitations. Does he/she have expertise in a certain area of fitness or prefer to work with certain types of clients, for example — sports conditioning, pre-natal fitness or post-rehabilitation? If you have a medical condition or a past injury, a personal trainer should design a session that accounts for this. If you are receiving care for a medical or orthope-

dic condition, a personal trainer should obtain your consent to discuss exercise guidelines and contraindications with your healthcare provider. Your personal trainer should also ask the doctor for medical clearance.

### Education

While an NCCA-accredited certification is the professional credential you should look for in a personal trainer, a college degree in exercise science or a related field is a definite plus. This lets you know that your personal trainer has a solid educational foundation in exercise program design.



### Ask For References

Ask the personal trainer for names, phone numbers and even testimonials of other clients he/she has worked with, particularly those who share similar traits and goals. Trainers may be more likely to empathize and understand your unique challenges and needs if they've worked with similar clients. If available, call previous clients to see if they were satisfied with their training experience and results. Inquire whether the personal trainer was professional, punctual and prepared, and whether the client's individual needs were addressed. Talk to fellow members of your health club or friends who are currently working with trainers for their recommendations.

### Talk To The Trainer

Developing a personal, yet professional relationship with your trainer is very important. Trust your instincts. Ask yourself if you think you could get along well with the trainer and whether you think the trainer is genuinely interested in helping you. The personal trainer you select should motivate you using positive, not negative, reinforcement. Importantly, that trainer should be someone you like.

### Rates

Personal training fees vary based on a trainer's experience and reputation, facility prices and geographic area, but they are well worth the investment. Although you may meet with your trainer more frequently at first, your financial investment should decrease as you become more independent, knowledgeable and fit.

### Professional Liability Insurance and Business Policies

Many personal trainers operate as independent contractors and are not employees of a fitness facility. Find out if the trainer you want to hire carries professional liability insurance. A reputable personal trainer should make sure you understand the cancellation policy and billing procedures. The best way to avoid confusion and to protect your rights is to have those policies in writing.

### Decide If This Is Someone You Can Work With

Some people like to exercise in the morning, some in the evening. Can a personal trainer 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 knowledgeable and experienced personal trainer who fits your style is the one to hire — because that is the professional who will help you achieve the best results.

### Compliments of:

Put your name and logo in this area, then make handout copies.



©2008 American Council on Exercise

Reprinted with permission from the American Council on Exercise.