

[IMAGE]

Is it Time for a Personal Trainer?

By Chelsea Cooper

Once you've made the decision to get in shape, it's important to take the next step and develop an appropriate fitness plan while you are committed and motivated. And once you begin your new lifestyle focused on fitness, you'll likely need someone to help you stay motivated and keep you on track. A personal trainer is your next step - but how do you even start the process of finding one?

There are some basic questions you need to ask, things to consider and research to be done when you begin your quest for a competent trainer. First, I will address those people who already have a gym membership and are looking for a personal trainer/fitness coach. Then, I will give some tips to those who don't have a gym membership and are looking for a trainer/fitness coach.

If You Are a Gym Member

- **Qualifications:** Find out what the trainer's qualifications are, what certifications they have and inquire about their background.
- **Experience:** How long have they been training and at which facilities?
- **Supervisor:** Talk to the fitness manager or supervisor of the training staff about the trainer.
- **Workout:** If you can, speak with the trainer. Many times, the trainer will give you a complimentary workout so you can get to know their style and expectations. Do they seem like a drill sergeant who will whip you into shape, or an encourager who can gently lead you where you want to go?
- **Observe:** Most of all, watch how the trainer interacts with their clients. Are they attentive, helpful, etc.?

If You're Not a Gym Member

image - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Finding a trainer if you don't have a gym membership can be a little more difficult. You will have to do a little more legwork than the person already committed to a gym. There are plenty of advertisements in the local papers and around town, but your best resources probably are your friends and family. Ask around and find out if anyone you know currently is training or has trained with a quality trainer. If they know someone, get as much information as you can about the trainer before speaking with them.

You still want to know how long they have been training, their background and their certifications/schooling. Ask if they give free sessions so you can try them out. You might see if they have a portfolio of past clients' weight loss or gain depending on individual client goals. Ask if you can come in and watch them work with their clients, just to see what type of workouts they do. There also are small gyms and studios that are strictly personal-training gyms. You can definitely call or walk in and get some information that way as well.

Other Considerations

Here are some additional tips to make this process a little easier and help you get the information you need to make a decision regarding a personal trainer:

- **Insurance:** Any trainer should have a minimum of \$2 million in liability insurance. You always should check the policy to see if it's up to date and covers everything you would be doing with your trainer (e.g., some policies exclude sports massage). At a larger chain, the company will pay for the trainer's insurance.
- **Equipment:** The trainer needs to have a good range of equipment. However, this is not always the be-all and end-all of fitness. Body-weight sessions can be great if done correctly.
- **Cost:** You need to look for a trainer within your price range. Remember, the most expensive is not always the best. Have a look at a few trainers to gauge what the average session price is in your area.
- **Experience Level:** For a trainer to give you the best results, they should have at least three years' experience in the industry. This level of experience means they will have honed their skills, allowing you to get the best possible training. You also should look for a trainer who continually updates their skills.

The Compatibility Factor

- Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark One of the most important aspects of personal training is how you and the trainer get along. Arranging a meeting or having a chat on the phone (before you start paying) should give you a good indication as to whether you click. Don't be afraid to try a few trainers; many training companies will offer initial sessions or consultations for free. This will allow you to meet the trainer you will be working with. This might seem like an in-depth process, but it's your money and time, so make sure you pick a highly qualified, professional trainer.

Sometimes all your research and time can't really give you enough of an indication as to whether you and your trainer will be compatible. Like any relationship, sometimes it doesn't work out. The trainer could have all the right qualifications and skills, but if there is a personality conflict or you are uncomfortable with the trainer (or vice versa), that could end the relationship.

Everyone likes to be trained differently. Some people like the boot-camp trainer (drill sergeant); some like a more encouraging trainer. Still others like trainers who are easy on them. You might not be sure what type of style you like until you start. The most important factor in all of this is that your sessions are fun. This will make it much easier to stay motivated, and more importantly, get you the results you want.

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