
Personal trainers – how to choose one

Summary

- You can find personal trainers at your local gym or fitness centre, by asking friends for word-of-mouth recommendations or by checking Fitness Australia's directory of registered exercise professionals.
 - The recommended minimum qualification for a personal trainer is to hold a Certificate IV in Fitness or a Diploma of Fitness.
 - Professional credentials and experience are vital, but it helps to rate personality high on your list of priorities too, since you may be spending a lot of time with this person.
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People use **personal trainers** to assist them reach their individual health and fitness goals. A personal trainer will tailor an exercise program to meet your goals and personal health needs, teach you the best way to exercise and motivate yourself.

Good places to start looking for a personal trainer include local gyms, health centres or fitness centres. When you're at the gym, watch trainers with their clients and see how they interact. Make a note of trainers who get along with their clients and seem fully involved in their workouts. Ask friends and workmates for word of mouth recommendations or check **[Fitness Australia's directory of registered exercise professionals](#)** for a fitness provider in your area.

Take your time before you make your final choice. Make sure your personal trainer is appropriately registered and qualified before entering into any agreement. You can verify your trainer's registration status by checking **[Fitness Australia's directory of registered exercise professionals](#)** or calling 1300 211 311.

While professional credentials and experience are vital, it helps to rate personality and communication high on your list of priorities as well. You may be spending a lot of time with this person.

Role of a personal trainer

A personal trainer should have relevant qualifications and be registered with a recognised industry association such as Fitness Australia. A personal trainer's job is to work with your health and allied health professionals, discuss your goals, assess your fitness level, design a program for you and help keep you motivated.

A personal trainer can:

- help you exercise safely and efficiently
- help motivate you
- help you with technique
- monitor your progress
- adjust your exercise program in response to your changing fitness level
- offer general advice on good nutrition according to national guidelines
- vary your exercise options to keep you motivated, interested and enjoying your workouts
- help you to manage some exercise on your own.

Personal training qualifications and experience

Registered personal trainers have completed a Certificate IV in Fitness, a Diploma of Fitness or a degree in Exercise Science or Human Movement. It is a good idea to:

- Ask about their professional qualifications. They should have proof of their certification, including first aid.
 - Ask about their experience. How long have they been working as a personal trainer?
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- Visit **Fitness Australia's website** and view the trainer's years of experience, qualifications and additional knowledge and skills.
- Ask what sort of results they've helped other clients achieve.
- Ask how they keep up to date on health and fitness research. For example, they may take refresher courses, attend industry seminars or subscribe to exercise science journals.
- If you have a specific medical problem, injury or condition (such as being pregnant, or having heart problems or diabetes), make sure your trainer has education in these areas and will work with your doctor and other relevant allied health professionals.
- Ask if they (or their employer) have professional liability insurance. They should have proof of this.
- Ask if they are aware of the industry standards, including codes of practice, ethics and the **Scope of Practice for Registered Exercise Professionals**.
- Ask if they are involved in any type of quality accreditation program.

Choosing a personal trainer

When making your choice, factors to discuss with the personal trainer include:

- How much does it cost to hire their services and what types of payment options are available? Do they offer a discount for larger training packages, for example, for more than one session a week?
- What about other fees, such as extra services or cancellation fees?
- Will they offer a discounted trial period before you commit? It is important you feel comfortable training with this personal trainer.
- Are they available at the particular times and days when you're free to exercise?
- Do they recommend that you complete the **adult pre-exercise screening tool** and consult with an allied health professional before starting a new exercise program? This may be important if you haven't exercised in a long time or have a chronic medical condition. Show the results of your pre-exercise screening to them or your doctor.
- What range of physical activity options do they offer? Would you be working out in a gym, at home or outdoors?
- How do they tailor exercise programs for clients? How would your preferences be taken into account? What sort of services do they offer to support you in achieving your goals?
- What about updates to the exercise program that accommodate your improving fitness levels?
- What allied health professionals networks do they have (for example, dietitians, physiotherapists) and work closely with?

Other things to consider include:

- Make sure you feel comfortable with their training approach.
- Check out the fees and their policy on contract cancellations.

Consider some more personal aspects that relate to the relationship with your trainer. Trust your instincts about the impressions the trainer makes upon you. Your personal trainer will ideally be:

- someone you like. Ask yourself if you think you could get along with the trainer and whether you think the trainer is genuinely interested in helping you
- a good listener – a good trainer will listen closely to what you say. Make sure they understand your goals. Make sure you feel comfortable asking questions
- attentive – a good trainer will be focused only on you during your sessions
- tracking your progress – a good trainer will regularly assess and monitor your progress, and change your program as required. They should also provide regular reports to you on your progress and associated health outcomes.

Beware of dubious personal trainers

If you're concerned about the qualifications of an exercise professional, ask to see their proof of professional credentials, or you can check if they're registered with Fitness Australia. Occasionally, trainers have been known to

be unethical, even though they have the correct credentials. Generally speaking, warning signs of a personal trainer who is unethical include that they:

- don't undertake any form of pre-exercise screening
- can't or won't provide proof of professional credentials
- can't or won't offer references
- try to force you into a contract during the first session – before you've had a chance to see if you're compatible
- try to sell you supplements or dieting aids, or insist that particular supplements or dieting aids must be taken as part of the program
- prescribe dietary advice for which they are not qualified or attempt to diagnose and treat injuries
- advocate exercise aids that may be dangerous, or weight loss techniques, such as saunas, passive exercise machines or body wraps
- have a 'one size fits all' exercise program that doesn't take your individual health and fitness into account
- insist that their method of training is the only method that works
- at your first session, take little notice of your goals and personal health and fitness requirements, and instead want you to do a workout
- don't turn up on time (or at all) to appointments and are difficult to contact by phone or email
- promise immediate and spectacular results – realistically, you'd expect to see some sort of improvement in approximately six weeks, although this will vary enormously, depending on factors such as your age, exercise history, gender and types of activities.

Where to get help

- Your **GP (doctor)**
- **Fitness Australia** Tel. **1300 211 311**
- Staff at fitness centres or other types of fitness providers

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