

Personal Trainer

Get people stronger, one session at a time. No degree needed, but you have to sell yourself.

TYPICAL PAY

\$47,160

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$29k to \$83k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

1 to 4 years

after high school

DEMAND

Very high

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Gyms, small studios, client homes, corporate wellness rooms, online

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grade 12
Any diploma works. Most certifying bodies require you to be 18 with a high school diploma or the equivalent.
- 2 CPR and AED (automated external defibrillator) certification** One day
Every certifying body requires a current card with a live, in person skills check. Online-only cards are usually rejected.
- 3 Study for an accredited certification** 3 to 6 months
Pick one accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies, the body gyms actually check for. Most people study 3 to 6 months part time.
- 4 Pass the exam** One sitting
A proctored multiple choice exam on anatomy, program design, screening and coaching.
- 5 First job and first clients** 1 to 2 years
Start on a gym floor, shadow senior trainers, then build your own schedule. Expect a year before it is full.

Pros and cons

- + Cheap and fast to start, no student debt
- + You see people change in front of you
- + Flexible, and easy to run alongside school
- Split shifts eat your mornings and evenings
- Income drops when clients quit, travel or get bored
- It is a sales job as much as a coaching job

Good to know

Your certification is not a license

No state government licenses personal trainers, so there is no exam you legally must pass. What gyms and insurers check instead is whether your certification is accredited by the National Commission...

The pay figure covers two jobs

The federal wage survey puts personal trainers in the same bucket as group fitness instructors, under the title Exercise Trainers and Group Fitness Instructors. Group classes are often paid per class and part ti...

Optional boosts

SCSC (Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist). Corrective exercise or post-rehabilitation. Group fitness certification. Youth or senior specialization.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Exercise Trainers and Group Fitness Instructors (39-9031.00)

American Council on Exercise: personal trainer certification requirements and costs

Internal Revenue Service: self-employment tax

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: physical activity data

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/personal-trainer>



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