

Becoming an ISSA Certified Personal Trainer



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Top Signs You Would Make a Great Personal Trainer



If you've been thinking about a new career, or a first career, and have a love for fitness and working out, personal training could be it. If you have what it takes, training can be lucrative, rewarding, and really good fun.

It's not a career for everyone, though. Even some people knowledgeable and passionate about fitness won't make good trainers. Check out these important signs you would make a good personal trainer before you take the leap.

You're Empathetic and Connect with People Easily

No one wants a robot for a personal trainer. An indifferent trainer is never going to be as successful—no matter what their experience or credentials are—as a trainer who connects with their clients and treats them with compassion.

You can provide a good workout and training plan, but without a trainer-client rapport, success will always be limited. The best trainers are invested in their clients' successes. They get to know their clients. They care. And, they empathize with the struggles their clients go through in trying to meet goals. If you've always found it easy and natural to connect with people and to empathize, you have a solid foundation for being a good trainer.

You're a Natural Leader and Coach

Clients come to trainers for a leader, not a friend. They need a supportive, compassionate coach, someone to guide them to their goals. If you take to that role naturally, taking charge when out with friends, taking the lead in organizing events, for instance, you have a good foundation for being a trainer.

You're Curious and Enjoy Learning

The fitness world is not static. It's always changing based on new information and scientific research. The best type of fitness professional keeps up to date on the research as well as trends. You can skate by as a trainer with a basic foundation of fitness knowledge, but you'll be a great trainer if you are always learning and seeking new ways to help clients meet their goals.

You Rarely Exercise Alone

If you're naturally drawn to others when you get active, you're a natural fit for training. For you, working out is a social activity. You thrive on the support of others and on providing encouragement. You prefer classes over solo workouts, group runs to lone runs, and a social bicycle outing to a long ride alone.

You don't have to be a social exerciser to be a great personal trainer, but if you are, it's a sign. You'll naturally fit into the world of always working with others, connecting, supporting, and working on goals together.

You Thrive on Setting Goals and Marking Progress

Not everyone gets excited about measuring and tracking progress. For many, it's a chore. But if you love to set goals and enjoy the satisfaction of seeing progress, you could be a great trainer. The best trainers make goals and progress the foundation of their work.

They help clients set goals and they measure progress along the way. They get excited for their clients when the measurements are headed in the right direction. They encourage and motivate when progress stalls or goes backward.

Why are fitness goals so important? [Get the answers here](#) and find out how to set effective goals for long-term success.

Do You Really Want to Be a Trainer?

So, all the signs are there. Does this mean that being a personal trainer is the right career fit for you? Maybe, and maybe not. Consider some of the important facts about what it means to do this job before you commit:

- **You really need to be certified, which is a commitment of time and money.** Many gyms require trainers be certified, but clients are also likely to choose a certified trainer over someone who is not.
- **Don't expect a nine-to-five job.** You'll be training people or teaching classes as early as 5 am, in the evenings, and on weekends. On the other hand, trainers have more flexibility to make their own schedules.
- **You have to be a trainer and a business owner.** Even with a job at a gym, you'll be expected to bring in personal training clients, which means marketing yourself. As a self-employed trainer, you will be a small business owner.
- **You'll change lives.** Be prepared to get emotionally involved. Good trainers get to know their clients and are invested in their success. This can be both difficult and incredibly rewarding.
- **Not all training relationships work out.** Training involves emotional highs and lows. It can hurt when you don't find success with a client, but it happens.
- **You'll be active all day.** This can be both good and bad. You may struggle to find time and energy to do your own workouts after running around with clients all day.

You may hit all the signs that you'll be a good trainer, but that still doesn't mean it's the right career choice. Before getting your certification, try to get some practical experience. Look for a trainer to shadow for a few days.

Get into the world of training as a way to see if this really is the career for you. It's possible you check all the boxes but don't really have what it takes when you start working with clients.

Personal trainers have a big responsibility. Clients put a lot of trust and hope in their trainers. They come to them with goals and ask for advice and guidance on how to get there. Don't take this decision lightly. If you think you would be a great trainer, take the next step and get certified. You owe it to future clients to be prepared and knowledgeable.

When you're ready to take the plunge, try the [ISSA's Certified Personal Trainer – Self-Guided Study Program](#). It will prepare you to work as a professional trainer, and you get to learn at home and at your own pace.

Can You Do Personal Training Without Certification?



Changing careers or beginning your first career is a big step. There are so many factors to consider. If you love fitness and working with people, being a personal trainer is an ideal choice. Before you get started, though, make sure you understand what it takes to not just work as a trainer, but to be successful and to have a lasting career in the fitness industry.

One of the most important factors in personal training is being certified. You should be prepared to complete an educational program that results in an official certification. This is not legally required. In fact, no state has a law requiring personal trainers to be certified. This doesn't mean you don't have to do it. If you're serious about this career, you need certification.

What Happens if You Try to Work Without Trainer Certification?

When choosing whether to get certified, you may want to make a list of pros and cons. But the truth is that there aren't really any pros. If you're sure you want to be a personal trainer, to make a real career of this, you need to be certified.

Skipping certification may seem like a good way to save time and money. Maybe you have years of personal experience in the gym and are self-taught. Maybe you have mentored with professional trainers and learned from them. In these cases, getting certified won't be hard. You have the foundational knowledge, and now you need the documentation to prove it.

YOU MAY NOT GET HIRED

While there are no laws that require certification, many gyms and other employers only hire certified trainers. This is for good reasons. They are committed to providing clients with high-quality training and to keeping them safe. It can be a liability issue to hire trainers who are not certified.

YOU MAY BE HIRED, BUT ONLY TO LEAD CLASSES

Some gyms hire uncertified trainers but limit their responsibilities. Without a trainer certification, you may be trusted to lead classes. A gym may give you some quick training in how to run a spin class, for instance, but won't let you take on individual clients.

IT MAY BE TOUGH TO GET A MENTOR

For those serious about personal training, learning doesn't end with passing a certification exam. If you really want to be a successful and good personal trainer, you need to continue your education by getting some hands-on experience.

Most fitness professionals do this by working with a mentor trainer. A gym, for instance, may hire you but have you work with a more experienced trainer before you take on your own training sessions. This is an important part of the learning process for a career that includes skills you can't learn from a book.

But, if you haven't gotten certified, a mentor trainer may not want to work with you. They'll want to see that you have the foundational knowledge for the job and also that you're serious about training as a career.

YOU MAY NOT GET INSURED

Another important consideration is insurance. If you can land a job with a gym or another employer, they should have liability insurance that covers all their trainers. But, if you're starting your own small business as a trainer, it's up to you to get insurance.

Business liability insurance protects you if a client gets hurt on your watch. For instance, if a client is doing an exercise you recommended and they become injured, you could be liable. They can sue you. The right insurance protects you financially in this kind of situation, and others, like damaged personal property.

You may find that an insurance company won't provide you with a policy if you are not certified. With certification, the insurer recognizes that you are qualified to work with clients and less likely to cause injuries or harm. Some insurers may still offer you a policy but expect to pay more because you are a bigger risk without certification.

ATTRACTING CLIENTS WILL BE MORE DIFFICULT

Consumers today are savvy, and they have options. They are unlikely to settle for an uncertified trainer if they can work with someone who has put in the time and the training to get certified. Word of mouth and good reviews from clients will help, but for many, a lack of certification may be a deal-breaker.

YOU COULD HURT SOMEONE

With all the reasons certification is important for you personally, it's easy to forget how this impacts other people. A personal trainer certification program teaches you how to train clients, and crucially it teaches you how to keep them safe.

No matter how long you've been working out, how enthusiastic you are about fitness and reading up on current trends, you still need to learn how to guide people safely. Someone could genuinely get hurt if you try to train without the proper background knowledge.

Not All Certifications Are the Same – How to Choose the Right Program

With no laws regulating personal training, any organization can offer certification programs. This means you need to be selective. Here are some important factors to consider:

- Check for accreditation. At a bare minimum, a program you choose should be accredited by or affiliated with one or more recognized organizations. For personal training, this may include the National Board of Fitness Examiners, the Distance Education Accrediting Commission, or the National Commission for Certifying Agencies.

- Look at how long the program or school has been in business. Any program that has been certifying trainers for decades sends a strong message about quality and authority.
- Consider personal needs. For instance, is the program conducted online? Is it self-paced? Does it have a timeline you have to follow or is it flexible? What are the costs, and can you afford them?
- A good school should have a variety of programs. For now, you may want to get a general personal training program, but you might want to go back later for a specialization in nutrition, senior fitness, or strength and conditioning, for instance.
- Look for extras. Choose a program that offers students more than just learning materials and a certification exam. You should also have access to online resources, networking, tools for growing a business, and regular support.
- Evaluate the learning materials. A good program keeps their textbooks and online resources up to date to reflect the constantly changing science of fitness and exercise.
- Look for job assistance or a guarantee. Some of the best programs for personal trainers give you a guarantee. Not only will they help you land a job after getting certified, but they may even refund your tuition if they can't get you placed.

Any good program should end in a certification exam. And a good program will prepare you to pass that exam. Before you take it, though, make sure you're ready. Spend some time studying and [follow this guide](#) to ensure you pass on the first try.

So, Can You Do Personal Training Without Certification?

The final answer is technically yes, but with a very strong caution. Laws do not currently require trainers to be certified, but that may change. Even without regulations in place, trying to work as a personal trainer without certification is risky. You risk hurting a client, big legal fees, and simply not being able to find work.

Certification, for these reasons, is essential if you want to be a successful, good personal trainer. To help people meet their fitness goals and to have a lasting career, start off on the right path. Get certified.

The next step to a career in personal training is to check out the [ISSA's Certified Personal Trainer – Self-Guided Study Program](#). This course provides everything you need to start working with clients and to get certified.

7 Compelling Benefits of Being a Certified Personal Trainer



Do you love working out? Do you have a passion for helping people? Would you like to earn a good living and have some flexibility in your career? Why not consider becoming a certified personal trainer?

There are so many benefits to being a personal trainer. You get to make a real and positive difference in people's lives. You enjoy regular access to the gym, and much more. What makes this career for you is personal. But you have a lot of reasons to choose training others as a lifelong career.

Before you get started, it's important to understand one thing. For a career in personal training, certification and continuing education are critical. This is the foundation of your skills. It is also proof to employers and clients that you are a professional.

Also, know that to succeed as a trainer, you have to be self-motivated and driven. You have to be dedicated to helping others and able to adjust, learn, and grow as you work with clients.

What Are the Benefits of Being a Certified Personal Trainer?

If you've been curious about becoming a personal trainer, consider these compelling benefits that come with having a career as a fitness professional:

1. DO WHAT YOU LOVE

Do what you love and you'll never work a day in your life, so the saying goes. There is some definite truth to this statement. If you love working out and being in the gym, can you imagine doing that every day for your career?

Picture yourself guiding clients through training sessions. Imagine yourself developing workouts, demonstrating form, and leading group fitness classes. All of this could be your day-to-day as a personal trainer.

You also get continual access to the latest in fitness via continuing education courses. These are courses you take to keep your personal training certification current. You choose which continuing education classes you'll take. So, you can select the ones that interest you most.

2. ENJOY A HEALTHIER CAREER

Modern life is so unhealthy, mostly because most people are sedentary for hours every day. Work is largely to blame. Most workers sit all day on the job, in offices, at desks, in trucks or cars. Even people who are active outside of work suffer from being forced to sit and be sedentary for so long every day, day after day.

But as a trainer, you'll have the opposite experience. You won't be stuck behind a desk, you'll be active most of the day, and as a result, you'll enjoy better overall health than you would in an office job.

3. EARN AS MUCH, OR AS LITTLE, AS YOU WANT

[The Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) (BLS) reports that the median pay for fitness trainers and instructors is \$40,390 per year. Though, the salary a personal trainer may earn varies drastically by individual.

This is because the career allows for a lot of flexibility. You can make this a full-time commitment, working in a gym for a regular salary, or you can work part-time or even for yourself, determining your own hours, rates, and earnings.

This flexibility not only allows you to determine your income, but it also gives you space to craft the kind of career you want. Do you want to be your own boss? You can do that. Do you prefer the stability of being an employee? There are plenty of gyms ready to hire qualified, certified trainers.

You can also earn extra cash by adding [group fitness instruction](#) to your list of offerings.

4. CHOOSE YOUR CAREER PATH AS A PERSONAL TRAINER

That flexibility also extends to the actual career you have with a certification in personal training. You can choose to be a traditional personal trainer, but even then, you have options: work in a gym full or part-time, start a personal training business and be your own boss, or be a freelance trainer working part-time.

You can also choose other types of jobs that require the expertise and knowledge a certified personal trainer will have. Some of the many other options you'll have with trainer certification include:

- Group fitness instructor
- Yoga instructor
- Boot camp leader
- Weight management consultant
- Corporate trainer and consultant
- Online trainer or coach

Fitness professionals have a variety of options. Unlike other industries, you don't need an associate's degree, bachelor's, or your master's degree to work in this role. All you need is your personal training certification.

5. WORK ANYWHERE (AND NOT JUST IN A GYM)

As people across the country become more aware of the benefits of getting fit, careers in personal training have soared. This is the kind of career that you can literally do anywhere. From the smallest towns to big cities and suburbs, trainers are needed everywhere to help people meet their health goals.

And demand is truly high all over the U.S. [According to the BLS](#), careers in fitness training and instruction are growing much faster than average job growth. Trainer jobs are increasing at a rate of 13 percent. That makes this a good time to join the fitness industry.

Working anywhere includes working remotely. Offering online personal trainer services allows you to provide effective training sessions right from your home.

6. YOU GET TO EXERCISE ALL THE TIME

You probably have thought about this career in part because you are personally passionate about working out and staying fit. As a personal trainer you'll be working on training clients, but at the same time, expect to be on your feet, being active and exercising constantly.

During your personal training sessions, you'll be demonstrating form and exercises. You'll also be working out alongside clients and groups of clients for motivation, accessing gym equipment whenever you want.

7. OF ALL THE BENEFITS OF A PERSONAL TRAINING CAREER, HELPING PEOPLE IS THE BEST

Ultimately this is a meaningful and fulfilling career because it allows you to make a positive difference in the lives of real people. This is the true benefit of working in health and fitness. You'll get to know and like your clients, working with them to improve their lives. They won't always love you, but when they hit their weight, fitness, athletic, and body composition goals, they will thank and appreciate you.

Training does so much more for people than change their physical appearances and fitness levels. What you really get to do that feels so good is to empower clients, help them realize their own potential and their inner athletes, and guide them to build their own sense of self-confidence and self-esteem. These are powerful changes, and you get to lead people to them. Starting with [your first personal training client](#).

Are you inspired to get started in a career as a personal trainer? If so, [start with the ISSA's Certified Personal Trainer Course](#). In this certification program, you will learn how to create customized exercise programs for your clients. You'll also learn how to motivate them to better reach their personal fitness goals.

Why Should You Become an Elite Personal Trainer?



If you want a fitness career, one option is to [become a personal trainer](#). With this type of certification, you get to spend your days working with clients to set realistic goals and achieve a higher fitness level. You're able to use your knowledge, skill, and passion to create an effective exercise program.

But maybe you're not the average person. For you, it's not enough to be "just" a personal trainer. It's not even enough to be a successful personal trainer. You want more. If this describes you, you may want to consider becoming an elite personal trainer.

What is an Elite Personal Trainer?

As the name suggests, an elite-level personal trainer is a trainer who is considered "the cream of the crop." This person has advanced fitness knowledge and skills. They know how to help a client reach their fitness goal with more than just exercise.

For instance, an elite personal trainer also has an in-depth understanding of nutrition. They know the difference between macronutrients and micronutrients, and the value each offers. They understand what a balanced meal plan looks like, as well as how to create one.

This higher-level trainer holds specialized knowledge in multiple additional areas. They might know more about functional movement or injury prevention, for example. In addition to one-on-one training sessions, they are a strength coach or teach group HIIT classes.

An elite personal trainer does all of these things. They are like several personal trainers rolled into one. They have the knowledge required to address a variety of issues and areas of fitness.

7 Benefits to Becoming an ELITE Personal Trainer

Sounds like a lot of extra work, right? There's no sugar coating it, it is. Earning your certification in three areas of fitness requires more time and effort than earning your certification in one. But there are also many benefits to adding to your certified personal trainer status with specializations. Here are seven.

#1: YOU BECOME A WELL-ROUNDED FITNESS PROFESSIONAL

If you have a cold that won't seem to go away, you go to your general practitioner (GP). You can also go to your GP if you sprain your wrist, your blood pressure is too high, or your back hurts. That's because this type of doctor is a well-rounded health professional. As an elite trainer, you are a well-rounded fitness professional.

Fitness isn't one single thing. It isn't only exercise or only nutrition. You can't go to the gym every day yet eat only high-calorie, high-fat foods and expect to be fit. You also can't eat healthy meals and always skip your workout sessions and become a top athlete.

Fitness is a multifaceted approach. It involves regular exercise and a healthy diet. It might also include functional training or advanced conditioning. It is many things rolled into one. An elite trainer knows how to address more of these areas, providing clients even greater benefits.

#2: YOU ARE RECOGNIZED AS A HIGHLY QUALIFIED PERSONAL TRAINER

If you are a student struggling in math, who would you rather have tutor you: someone proficient in algebra only or someone who also knows trigonometry and calculus? The more areas a professional is proficient in, the greater their ability to be recognized as a highly qualified trainer.

The value in this is that people will come to you for help in achieving a variety of fitness goals. The fact that you hold multiple certifications suggests that you can assist them in many areas. They feel that they can look to you for help with more of their struggles. This increases your appeal as a personal trainer.

#3: YOU ARE ONE STEP ABOVE YOUR COMPETITORS

[The Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) reports that there are currently around 373,700 fitness trainers and instructors in the U.S. And this number is expected to grow by 57,600 over the next few years. How do you set yourself apart from these other personal training professionals? By earning elite status.

When prospective clients want to hire a trainer and they see that you are a fitness expert, you jump to the front of the line. They see you as a leader in the fitness industry, so you become their first choice.

#4: YOU HAVE A BROADER CLIENT BASE

Some clients want a workout program that can help them lose weight or gain muscle. Others are more concerned about diet. Then there are the clients who have more specialized issues. They need a corrective exercise program or they play sports and their coach told them they need to work on their conditioning.

As an elite trainer, you can help all of these types of clients, depending on your certifications of course. This provides you a more expansive client base. By default, it also lessens your risk of not having enough work because you can help so many different people.

#5: YOU CAN OFFER A COMBINATION FITNESS TRAINING PACKAGE

Maybe you have a training program that provides instruction in both exercise and nutrition. Having knowledge in both of these areas tells prospective customers that you know what you're doing. It also prevents you from going outside [your scope of practice](#).

The nice thing about having a combination workout and diet program is, by addressing more than one area, it will likely offer clients better results. Tackling their fitness from more than one direction will often provide more positive changes in less time.

This is good for them because they are able to hit their goals faster. It's also good for you because the better you are at providing results, the more sought-after you become.

#6: YOU OFFER MORE VALUE TO THE ELITE ATHLETE

Maybe your dream personal training position involves working with professional athletes. Earning an “elite” designation makes you more compelling to this clientele.

Think like an athletic trainer for a moment. Who would you rather have your star athletes working with: a personal trainer or an elite personal trainer? The elite trainer will likely win every time.

#7: YOU CAN DO MORE THAN PERSONAL TRAINING

Another benefit of having the title of an elite trainer is that it opens doors outside of the gym or training studio. Your credentials can be used to get speaking gigs, for instance. You can use your education in multiple areas to inspire greater fitness from the stage.

You might also take your advanced education and use it to train future trainers. Teach them the ins and outs of building and [growing a fitness business](#). Help them learn the skills necessary to become a top trainer. Talk about what an effective training session looks like or the elements of a results-driven workout.

The options are endless for what you can do with your multi-level training. Be creative and consider all of your options. If personal training is your thing, great. But if you want to do more, becoming an elite trainer can help get you there.

How to Get Started as an Elite Personal Trainer

The first step in becoming an elite personal trainer is to take the courses required. With the ISSA, this is the personal training course, the nutrition course, and another specialization of your choosing. Once each one is complete, you must pass a certification exam. This garners you your personal training certification, nutrition specialist certification, and certification in another area of your choice. Pass all of the exams and you will receive your elite fitness certification.

Ready to get started? Enroll in the [ISSA's Elite Trainer certification program](#) today. Take your personal training career to the next level and join some of the nation's top trainers. This puts you one step closer to becoming the best of the best!