

# You Just Got Certified— Now What?



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# Table of Contents

<b>Where to Work as a Personal Trainer</b>	<b>3</b>
• Determine Your Fitness Trainer Career Goals	4
• Landing Your First Job	4
• Experienced Personal Trainers – Room for Growth	6
• Small Gyms vs. Large Gyms	7
• Getting into Private Personal Training	7
<b>Tips to Get Hired as a Personal Trainer</b>	<b>8</b>
• Be Professional	9
• Show That You Can Communicate	9
• Being an Expert Trainer Isn't Always Enough	9
• Do Your Research and Know What Clients Need	10
• Strike Out on Your Own	10
• Be Persistent	10
<b>Getting Experience as a Personal Trainer</b>	<b>12</b>
The Experience Employers Want	13
• Get Experience Before Completing Your Certificate	14
• Expand Your Experience	14
<b>Getting Your First Personal Training Client</b>	<b>15</b>
• Connect with Gym Members	16
• Social Media and the Online World	16
• Get to Know the Neighborhood	17
• Create a Referral Program	17
<b>Fitness Nutrition: Why and How</b>	<b>18</b>
• A Need for Nutritional Expertise	19
• What Sets a Fitness Nutritionist Apart?	19
• Adjacent Career Opportunities in Fitness Nutrition	21
• What to Do Next	21

# Where to Work as a Personal Trainer



Becoming a personal trainer is an important step toward making your dreams come true and turning your passion into making a living. But you're not really a working trainer until you land that first job.

The job market is booming for trainers right now. You can expect to see ongoing growth, which means there should be plenty of jobs out there. On the other hand, it can seem overwhelming initially, and maybe you're not sure where to turn for that important first position.

Or, maybe you have already been working as a trainer for a few years and you're ready for a switch. Working in one place or in one type of job for an extended period can be great, but it can also be draining. Sometimes you need to change to advance your career or just to try something different and get inspired again. Here's what you need to know in either case.

## Determine Your Fitness Trainer Career Goals

Before you make any big decisions, take a minute to outline what you want from your career as a fitness professional. This is important if you are just starting out and newly certified, but it also doesn't hurt to reflect a little if you're already in the business. Here are some questions to consider as you craft your career goals:

- Do you want to work full time as a trainer, or will this be a supplemental income?
- How much money do you imagine you'll earn per year as a personal trainer?
- Is your dream to be an entrepreneur or self-employed? Or are you more of a team player/employee type of worker?
- Do you want to teach group fitness classes or focus on one-on-one training sessions?
- Do you have or do you plan to get any specialty certifications, like nutrition or glutes?
- What is your fitness or training philosophy?

If you haven't thought about these questions before, now is the time to start mulling them over. If you don't have a good idea of the kind of trainer you want to be, how you envision the work you do, or what your basic philosophy of training clients is, you may end up with a less-than-perfect position.

## Landing Your First Job

Answering these questions and setting your occupational goals are especially important if you are new to the business. You also need to know what type of options exist for trainers in the fitness industry. There are a lot of different occupations in fitness that you may not have been aware even existed. From working for yourself to being part of a large gym chain, and even landing a job that lets you travel, you've got choices.

### Working for a Gym

Not all personal trainers who work in gyms work for the gym. Some are self-employed and rent space and time to work with clients. There are some advantages to being a gym employee, though:

- Steady work and regular clients
- A regular and (more) guaranteed paycheck
- Insurance is covered by the gym in most cases
- Access to all the equipment and space you need
- Professional marketing so you don't have to find new clients
- The option to mix group sessions with one-on-one clients

## Spas, Resorts, and Smaller Fitness Centers

Wherever there is a gym, there is a potential job for a certified trainer. Look at any type of facility that includes but is not necessarily dedicated to providing workouts. Spas and resorts are great examples of this. They often hire one or two staff trainers to help their guests. This can be an interesting job because you are likely to see different clients all the time. Large apartment complexes may also have trainers on staff.

Before you take one of these smaller jobs, though, be sure you understand that the work may not be full time. Some facilities may only hire part-time trainers or hire personal trainers to work on a contract basis. As a contractor, you would not be an employee and would not get the resulting benefits. Contractors only work when work is available, so income may be limited with that type of position. It's a good option for anyone interested in part-time, freelance work.

## Cruise Ships

Take the idea of working in spa and vacation facilities a step further and consider getting a job on a cruise ship. These massive ships have thousands of people on them at any given time and are like small cities. There is a need for all kinds of professionals to assist guests, and that includes personal trainers. Just be sure you have your sea legs and are comfortable traveling before accepting this type of position.

## Senior Living Facilities

The fitness industry is growing in all segments, including for older adults. People of all ages are more interested in getting in shape and being healthy and active than ever before. And senior living facilities are now including gyms and trainers to meet the demand.

Working with seniors is a great choice if you have a specialty certification for working with older adults or with people who have special needs or physical disabilities or limitations. A [specialization in senior fitness](#) boosts not only your knowledge and skills but also your hiring potential and opportunity for higher pay. Depending on the size of the community you may be able to land a full-time, part-time, or contract and freelancing job.

## Community Centers

For a really rewarding job, consider looking into local community centers and non-profit groups that offer recreation and workout training for community members. These positions may pay less than what you would earn at a private gym, but you would be helping to reach people who may not otherwise have access to fitness and training.



At a community center you may lead group fitness classes more often than taking on one-on-one clients. You may also organize and design classes and guide recreational activities like intramural sports teams, or fitness outings such as hikes. Expect to work with community members of all ages, from kids to seniors and sometimes entire families.

## Experienced Personal Trainers – Room for Growth

As a fitness professional with years of experience under your belt, don't think there is no room to grow or advance. You can move your career up and forward in several ways, earning more and taking on more responsibility and new challenges. Here are some of your options:

### Get a New Specialty Certification

A fun way to challenge yourself and to change your occupational path is to get certified in a new specialty area related to fitness. Consider becoming [certified in nutrition](#), for instance, and offer your clients a new service helping them make better food choices. As a [corrective exercise specialist](#), you'll be training clients who need specific help with injuries or improving form and performance.

Some other ideas for specialty certifications include:

- Glute specialist
- Recovery
- Strength and conditioning
- Yoga instructor
- Group fitness
- Bodybuilding
- Senior and youth fitness

You may also want to improve your overall skills and abilities by becoming a master certified trainer. Learn more about becoming an Elite or Master Trainer through ISSA's [advanced certification programs](#).

### Land a Job as a Gym or Fitness Center Manager

Another way to advance your career as a trainer is to take on a job with more responsibilities. Gyms, fitness centers, spas, resorts, senior living communities, and community centers need managers and often prefer to hire trainers as they will be overseeing the other trainers.

This is the kind of job you can work up to if you are happy at the facility where you currently work. But you can also branch out and take the experience you have accumulated to a new gym or a totally new type of fitness center and land a job as a manager.

### Take the Leap into Small Business Ownership

Take your experience as a working trainer and start your own fitness business. Just be prepared to work long hours, learn about marketing and invoicing, find places to train clients, and shop around for liability insurance.

A lot goes into being a small business owner, but it can also be rewarding. You will get to make your own hours and determine how much you earn. Plus, you can offer any style of fitness that interests you: individual sessions, group classes, boot camps, and more.

## Small Gyms vs. Large Gyms

Whether you're a new or experienced personal trainer, you will likely end up working at a gym at some point in your career, if not for the duration. Here you also have a choice: small or large. There are advantages and disadvantages of both, and the decision largely comes down to your own preferences.

- A large gym may be able to get you more clients, sessions, and group classes.
- You can develop closer relationships with clients at a small gym.
- A small gym may allow you to give more personalized attention to each client.
- You may struggle to get full-time work at a small gym.
- Large gyms often have more equipment and variety.
- Large gyms, despite their size, are uncomfortably crowded at times.
- You may earn more at a larger gym.

## Getting into Private Personal Training

Private personal training is a service many but not all trainers offer. This means working with just one client at a time, and as a trainer you may choose to do this exclusively. The benefits are that you really get to know your clients and that you can set your hourly prices to earn what you feel is fair. It's not always easy to get into this kind of training, though, especially as a new trainer.

To get into private training, you may need to start by working in a gym. This will give you experience and help you network with potential clients. As you make a transition to private personal training, consider offering a few free sessions to select first clients. This will give you the chance to get good reviews so you can market to new clients.

You will need to find a space to work with your clients, another good reason to start with a gym job. You'll have an established relationship with a gym and your foot in the door for renting space at a reasonable rate. Also, remember that as a private trainer, if you are not affiliated with a gym or fitness company, you will essentially be a small business owner and will need to have insurance.

Beginning your career as a certified personal trainer is exciting. Your future is wide open with seemingly endless opportunities. This can be overwhelming, so weigh your options carefully and take time to figure out the short-term and long-term goals for your career before you take the next step.

If you've been thinking about becoming a personal trainer but haven't taken the leap to get certified, now is the time to go for it! To learn more about becoming a successful, certified personal trainer, [check out ISSA's certification program](#) that also includes tips on starting your own business.

# Tips to Get Hired as a Personal Trainer





You have your certification in hand; you're excited to start training your first clients; you've visited all your local gyms; and yet, you aren't getting hired.

What have you done wrong?

Getting a job, even with the right certification, takes a little finesse. Here are some guidelines to help you get out ahead of the crowd and land that first personal training job.

## Be Professional

Common feedback new trainers receive is a lack of professionalism. During interviews or while dropping off resumes, these new trainers demonstrated a disrespectful attitude, arrogance, or condescension toward gym staff.

Approach every interaction you have with a potential employer as your most professional self.

- Be respectful.
- Come prepared with your [resume, a cover letter, references](#), proof of your certification, and even your transcripts to show the coursework you have done.
- Wear appropriate clothing and lean toward overdressing rather than being too casual.
- Be prepared to demonstrate your skills by leading a short class or giving a sample training demonstration.

## Show That You Can Communicate

No gym will care anything about your certification or expertise in creating effective training programs if you can't talk to clients and make them feel comfortable, or if you can't lead a group of people through a class without getting nervous or stumbling over your instructions.

The hiring team at the gym will be able to tell right away if you can communicate well, so try this trick: Create and practice a short testimonial. Take some time to write a short essay, just a half page or so, about why you became a trainer, why you love what you do, and who inspired you and helped you get this far.

Turn this into an introductory testimonial that can become your cover letter for a resume and your sales pitch for yourself when you apply for jobs. Practice saying it without memorizing it word-for-word, so it sounds natural and genuine. This short speech can prove to those who are hiring that you can communicate clearly.

## Being an Expert Trainer Isn't Always Enough

You put in the effort to be a trainer because you are passionate about fitness and health, right? And you want to help people realize their goals. This is what being a trainer is all about.

Working as a trainer at a gym goes beyond this, though. You can be exceptional at fitness and help people train better, but if you can't sell what the gym is offering to clients, you may not be a good candidate for a job.

Gyms are looking for great trainers who can sell classes, personal training sessions, and even gear and products. To be the best candidate for a gym job you need to demonstrate that you can sell.

On your resume and in interviews, talk about any experiences you have had in sales, even if it is only that retail job you had years ago. If you can say you learned any sales strategies from that job, play it up. Include all past experiences in communications, marketing, psychology, and even education or business in general. These will all demonstrate that you can sell as well as train.

## Do Your Research and Know What Clients Need

Being prepared and knowing what gyms are looking for in a trainer will give you a head start in landing a position. If you walk into a gym that caters to the over-55 age group and can demonstrate that you have worked with older clients before and know how to develop programs tailored to their needs, you will have a huge advantage over your competition.

Also, keep this in mind as you look for new clients. Whether you work on a contract basis or as a gym employee, you will need to sell your services to get new clients to sign on. If you know what they want and need, you can better sell yourself. If you live near a golfing community, let people know that you have a fitness program designed specifically for golf.

It's also important that you take the time to find out what individual prospective clients want. If you know the woman you met the other day wants to lose ten pounds, make sure she knows why you are the best person for weight loss training. Ask what prospective clients want from training and then [demonstrate how you can meet that need](#).

## Strike Out on Your Own

Maybe being an employee just isn't for you. Trainers can work on a [freelance or contract](#) basis, but keep in mind that working this way means getting new clients is all on you. You won't have a gym with its marketing department to send clients your way. You will have to hustle and sell to get paying clients and you may not always have a steady income.

With that warning in mind, it can be rewarding to go your own way and be your own boss. You get flexibility and freedom from the restrictions of a gym and its corporate rules. You will need to consider where to offer your services. Some gyms may rent out space to you, but if you have facilities within your home, that may work for you as well.

## Be Persistent

Being a trainer is not about being superhumanly strong or having a perfect education or even just training plus a little luck. Successful, working trainers got where they are through hard work and persistence. If you get rejected

by the first, second, third, or even fourth gym, reflect on the possible reasons and get prepared for the next interview.

Persistence extends to getting clients too. Sell your services to just about everyone you meet. Use social media. Build a website to sell your programs. Do what it takes to get a job and build up a strong client base. Hard work is what it takes. You can't just sit at the gym and expect clients to come to you. There are too many other trainers out there already working hard to get those clients.

So, remember, this is a competitive field and gyms only want to hire the absolute best. To be considered, being certified is just the beginning. You need to present yourself in a professional manner, have a great resume, give an excellent interview, and prove that you can be a good salesperson.

And if you really want to stand out, add a certification that will boost your services as a personal trainer. [Check out ISSA's nutrition course](#) to make yourself a one-stop shop for anyone and everyone wanting to improve their fitness and health.

# Getting Experience as a Personal Trainer





Getting experience while you're still learning is a great way to set a strong foundation for your personal training business. Here you'll learn more about what type of experience future employers are looking for, the best ways to gain personal training experience, and proven methods for finding potential clients once you get hired.

## The Experience Employers Want

First, it's helpful to know what kind of experience is valuable to your future employers so you can look for specific opportunities and track relevant information.

### General Knowledge

Employers have a list of general criteria that candidates need to meet, which usually includes having a CPR/AED certification and a personal training certification.

Many employers state that a bachelor's degree in a relevant field of study is preferable but not required. Typically, only medically supervised or highly specialized programs (think rehabilitation or athletic training) will require a bachelor's degree.

### Demonstrated Skills

Employers want you to demonstrate your program development skills, whether you interview at large gyms or private studios.

You may be asked how you would create a program for a made-up profile that fits the gym's client base. If you're interested in working at a specific gym, do your research to find out what types of clients they attract and seek out opportunities to serve that population.

You may be asked to conduct a live training session. During this mock training session, the interviewer will assess your skills. They will observe the way you engage with them in conversation, how you demonstrate exercises, the cues you give to correct form, and how you carry yourself.

Expect to be asked how you would handle an unhappy client. Every gym has those hard-to-please members, and a good personal trainer is highly skilled in client-retention techniques.

### Sales Experience

As you gain experience in sales, it is important to demonstrate persistence and a positive attitude. Most gyms will provide sales training to staff, so it is important that you be eager to learn and demonstrate that you're working on your sales skills.

Include all of your sales experience on your resume. Note the dates, location, tasks, and contact information of your supervisors.

## Get Experience Before Completing Your Certificate

Now that you know the kind of experience employers are looking for, you can go out and seek the right opportunities to learn! But keep in mind that gaining experience is usually a free gig. Don't expect to earn a whole lot while you get your feet wet, that will come after you're ready to dive in the deep end.

An excellent way to get experience as a trainer-in-training is to offer your services at non-profit organizations or events.

### Faith-based Organizations

The community church, synagogue, or mosque is a great place to start. Perhaps the youth program would love to have you implement some fun games and exercise. You might also volunteer as an assistant coach for the youth sports program.

Senior fitness classes, usually held mid-morning or early afternoon a few times per week, are another way to develop your skills as a personal trainer.

If you're a member of a faith-based organization, volunteer to start a program. Whether you're offering individual sessions or group fitness classes, this will help you develop and demonstrate sales and marketing skills!

### Race Events

What better place to learn than at a sports-focused event like a race? Some events have trainers lead a warm-up session to kick-off the event. Not ready for the spotlight? You could staff the registration table, a water station, or hand out snacks or medals at the end of the event.

These events pull double duty as networking opportunities. You can meet potential employers, potential clients, or potential fitness business partners here!

### Community Health Events

Your community likely hosts several health and wellness events throughout the year where local vendors can sell their products or services and there is entertainment, food, and family fun activities.

You can volunteer to run some of the free activities or seek out volunteer opportunities with vendors. If a local chiropractor is attending, volunteer to attract patrons on which the doctor can conduct posture assessments.

## Expand Your Experience

Gaining experience as a new trainer can seem challenging at first, but once you realize how many opportunities exist, it's easy to start adding to your resume.

Check out all the [certification courses](#) ISSA has to offer, from the Personal Trainer certification to Yoga Instructor and Master Trainer certifications, build yourself a successful new career.

# Getting Your First Personal Training Client



Earned your certification and secured a job? Now your new facility expects you to live up to your resume and start bringing new clients through the door. You're totally ready for this!

Becoming certified as a personal trainer can be empowering and even life changing. And, for those setting out in search of your first client, it can be more than a little intimidating. The reality is that very few new trainers "hit the ground running." They also rarely make a lot of money from the start. However, being assertive in your desire to become successful in a gratifying career will help.

## Connect with Gym Members

Spend a lot of time in the gym. Become a familiar face and meet as many people as possible. And it never hurts to look the part. Show that you know your way around the gym and that you understand the importance of keeping yourself physically fit.

A smart way to get noticed is to provide a free training session for a friend, colleague, or family member. It allows everyone else to see you in action. It will speak to how you interact with clients and put your knowledge to work.

Remember, you're among like-minded people in the gym, so don't be afraid to start up a conversation. Let it be known you are a certified personal trainer looking for business. Be willing to share your knowledge and offer tips to anyone who seems open to the information. Seek out anyone interested in weight loss, strength training, or incorporating new exercises into their workouts.

Consider offering a free training session to someone who appears to be a potential client. They might come away from the workout impressed with your knowledge and how comfortable it was working with you. For the most part, people prefer to not make a financial commitment when "going in blind." Let your assets work for you while making potential clients feel better about their investment.

## Social Media and the Online World

Be willing to market your services, especially when just starting out. Start using Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, or any other form of social media. There is no better way to spread the word that you are open for business as a certified personal trainer.

Sharing your fitness knowledge within your network enhances your credibility. It also expands your reach at no cost to you, which is vital when looking for your first client. Here are a few tips to effectively network using social media:

1. Follow professionals you want to emulate.
2. Engage your audience with relevant content.
3. Share videos to show potential clients what a personal training session with you looks like.
4. Share before and after photos of client's reaching their fitness goals.
5. Support and market your personal training facility by liking and sharing their content.



Creating your own website is another option. It provides a place to promote your business through video, testimonials, and personal blogs.

Even more lucrative is the option of starting an online training arm for your business, where clients purchase access to your various workout videos.

## Get to Know the Neighborhood

Reaching out to the local community offers another way to reach potential clients. Distribute business cards and flyers to area businesses that agree to share them with their customers. Include a description of the services you offer and a way to contact you. Offering a free consultation is a good way to convince people to make that all-important initial contact.

Local health organizations offer another way to reach potential clients. Connect with various clinics, doctor's offices, and senior living facilities. Let them know you are local and interested in helping anyone recovering from an injury, in need of losing weight, or wanting to live a more active lifestyle. Become their go-to contact for anyone who would benefit from the use of a certified personal trainer.

## Create a Referral Program

As you start working with your initial clients, if you help them achieve their fitness goals, they will naturally share their experience. But don't wait until they start dropping dress sizes to ask for a referral, let them know from the start that referrals are your favorite kind of compliment.

Take advantage of a new client's excitement, ask them to recruit some accountability partners. If they can bring a few friends on board, offer to reduce their cost of training or to host private group training sessions.

Remember to be willing to invest your time at the outset of building your brand. It can be a lot of work, but it also can lead to a financial payoff down the road. Work hard to get your name out there and [add an ISSA specialization](#) (or two or three!) to stand out from the crowd and draw in additional clients. As a [certified personal trainer](#), you have plenty of options to make a living in the fitness industry.

# Fitness Nutrition: Why and How



Gaining an ISSA certification as a personal trainer brings with it a working knowledge of good nutrition to pass on to your clients to enhance their overall fitness. Learning how to identify a client's goals and motivations, as well as any outside factors that might be hindering those goals, are equally important.

Clearly, clients need to combine good nutrition with an effective exercise program to achieve their goals. Whether a client wants to gain muscle, lose fat, or establish a healthier lifestyle, the limiting factor usually lies beyond the exercise training program.

## A Need for Nutritional Expertise

Because quality nutrition is such a critical aspect of good health and fitness, there is a need to have more than a working knowledge of the fundamentals of nutrition. Nutrition for competitive athletes, senior citizens, or those with chronic medical conditions are all examples of situations where a deeper understanding of the subject is in order.

An [ISSA certification in nutrition](#) offers you the tools and knowledge needed to provide your clients that additional expertise. Similarly, athletes, people dealing with chronic illness, people with food allergies, and those dealing with obesity are among the specialized populations that can benefit from your services as a specialist in fitness nutrition.

There is an increased need for nutritional guidance as more people understand the importance of eating right and staying active to prevent disease. Gaining a fitness nutrition certification opens you up to an industry that offers a variety of positions and excellent compensation.

According to [glassdoor.com](#), the average salary for a nutrition specialist in the United States is \$51,183. Numerous companies and organizations have nutritionists on staff, including hospitals, nursing homes, and collegiate and professional sports teams. It's become common for professional athletes to hire nutrition specialists to aid in their training as well as to oversee their diet throughout the course of a demanding season.

As a Certified Nutritionist, you can start your own business as well. You can offer nutrition consultations for your personal training clients and produce nutrition guides and videos. Is it for you? [Check out this article to learn more about what it takes to be a great nutrition coach.](#)

## What Sets a Fitness Nutritionist Apart?

Among the important skills and expertise you'll gain is the ability to help clients make better nutrition choices and develop healthy habits. Through the course, you'll learn the communication skills needed to be an effective coach and how to help clients to set and meet goals.

Additionally, you will learn how to guide clients in selecting fresh, nutrient-dense foods, and how to shop for and prepare healthy meals. When applicable, fitness nutritionists will be able to help clients meet specific nutrition goals.

Among the key areas of study are:

- Carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, and minerals
- Food as energy for maintenance, physical work, and repair
- Effects of exercise on nutritional needs and how nutrition affects exercise
- Assessing a client's nutritional situation and their needs
- Determining the best approach for each client
- Progressing clients until they reach their goals

## A Deep Understanding of Nutrition

The nutrition specialist course teaches you the practical skills of coaching like a fitness nutritionist as well as the scientific principles those skills are based on. Knowing how the body adapts to exercise is one of the keys to understanding what it needs nutritionally to work at the optimal level.

You will learn about:

- Digestion and absorption
- Energy transformation and metabolism
- Energy balance
- Aerobic and anaerobic metabolism
- Macronutrients and micronutrients
- Hydration

Gaining a thorough understanding of nutrition and the body positions you to meet the specific needs of each client. You have the tools to help clients develop personalized and informed nutrition habits as you gather details through their assessments. Additionally, you can suggest nutritional supplements that might prove beneficial to your clients' unique needs.

Keep in mind that your goal is to help clients meet their goals. As a nutritionist, you will help clients set specific nutrition goals and develop a plan to ensure those goals are met. Finally, any needed adjustments can be made until the goals have been met.

## Learn Nutrition at Your Own Pace

Enrolling in [ISSA's Nutritionist program](#) ensures that you can study at your own pace, with flexible, online learning to fit your schedule. Then you will take the exam online when you are ready. ISSA provides unlimited educational support throughout the process. Once certified, you have access to continuing education resources that allow you to stay up to date on issues, trends, and new developments.

Those who take the ISSA course are made aware that the information provided is for general educational purposes only. The material is not a substitute for consultation with a healthcare provider regarding medical conditions and needs. Each state has its own statutes in your state regarding the nutrition information provided by non-licensed individuals.



## Adjacent Career Opportunities in Fitness Nutrition

What else can you do with your nutrition certification? More than you think:

- Corporate fitness and nutrition consultant
- Online nutrition coach
- Transformation specialist
- Author and expert in nutrition lifestyle change
- Fitness business owner
- Sports nutritionist
- Personal fitness nutritionist
- Elite fitness coach

## What to Do Next

Make the most of your personal training career by offering a well-rounded skill set in fitness and nutrition. A great career is right at your fingertips. If you're already certified as a personal trainer, take that next step: [Formalize your nutrition coach credential with ISSA's Nutritionist course](#). The transition happens faster than you think—from the time you enroll, you could have your certificate within 90 days!

Want to level up even more? Take on [ISSA's Elite Trainer Certification](#). You'll get your personal training certification, your nutrition certification, and one other advanced specialization of your choice! Want to focus on yoga? Glutes? Strength and conditioning? The choice is yours!