



# THE 7 MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK A PERSONAL TRAINER

Trainers chime in on the questions you **SHOULD** be asking when hiring a trainer.

By **M&F Editor**

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So, you have fitness goals and want results — but need help. This is where hiring a personal trainer can bridge that gap.

Whether you're looking to nail a one-rep max, drop a few sizes, get ready for competition, or just needing to ramp up your current fitness routine, utilizing a personal trainer can be a total game-changer.

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But, how do you find a quality trainer that best suits you and your goals? These personal trainers are here to help.

We asked several personal trainers on some of the important questions they hope potential clients would ask them. Here's what they tell you should be asking your trainer.

## 1. WHAT ARE YOUR CREDENTIALS?

It might seem like you're prying into someone's background, but don't be shy. After all, you're a paying client and will be putting in the hard work. Although degrees or certifications don't necessarily guarantee you the best trainer, Anthony Carey M.A., CSCS, feels this is still a very important question to ask your trainer. "Trainers who have an exercise science-related degree and/or a national certification have demonstrated a level of competency that someone who took a weekend workshop or internet certification won't have."

Look for certifications by certifying organizations such as the American Council on Exercise, The National Strength and Conditioning Association, the National Academy of Sports Medicine, and the American College of Sports Medicine. "These organizations have achieved accreditation by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA)," Carey adds.

Expansion of knowledge and growth in their field should be ongoing as well.

"Also, be sure that the trainer is maintaining continuing education units to keep

current on the latest research and trends,” Carey suggests. Once you’ve landed a trainer with great credentials, you’ll be one step closer to achieving your goals.

## 2. WHAT CRITERIA WILL YOU USE TO DETERMINE MY EXERCISE PROGRAM?

Cookie-cutter fitness plans or “well-rounded” programs most likely mean the trainer is placing you, your medical history, and possible previous injuries on the back-burner. A trainer should take into account any medical conditions or past injuries. “You should always be asked to fill out a health history questionnaire to determine your needs and limitations,” Carey says. If you are under a doctor’s care, the trainer should discuss any exercise concerns with your doctor and should ask for a health screening or release from your doctor. “The trainer should then perform both a cardiovascular assessment and musculoskeletal assessment to determine your current level of fitness,” Carey adds.

Every individual has their own strengths and weaknesses and this should be determined through the assessment and then addressed in your specific exercise prescription. A detailed program designed for you is a great sign that you may have just found your trainer.

## 3. CAN I SEE FEEDBACK FROM PAST AND PREVIOUS CLIENTS?

There’s a reason people head straight to the “reviews” section on Amazon before making a purchase: They want to see what everyone else has to say about the item they’re about to invest in. The same research needs to be exercised when hiring a personal trainer.

Matt Pippin, CPT, with Pippin Performance encourages you to ask for “testimonials from current or former clients.” Great reviews, recommendations,

and results will speak volumes about the trainer. “It’s also a good idea to find out if the trainer has worked with someone whose goals are similar to yours,” he adds. For example, someone of a retired age might not wish to work with a trainer who solely trains young bodybuilders, and vice versa.

In doing this, the trainer you are speaking with might even refer you to someone who works with clients like you.

## **4. DO YOU HAVE PROOF OF PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY INSURANCE?**

It’s important to know that every A-rated insurance carrier that provides professional liability for the fitness industry requires certification from a reputable certifying body. “The implications here are clear: If the trainer does not have coverage, he/she is either not insurable or is not adhering to our professional standards,” Carey says. This is where you should continue shopping for a personal trainer who is covered.

## **5. WHAT IS YOUR COMMUNICATION STYLE OR DEMEANOR WHEN TRAINING CLIENTS?**

Motivation comes in many different ways of communication when it comes to personal training sessions, but you must match your needs with a trainer that can fulfill them. “Do you need a motivator or educator, or touch of love?” Carey asks. “The approach the trainer brings to your session can determine if you stick to your program or not,” he adds.

Your trainer is more than someone who designs an exercise program for you. They are your ally and support network for reaching your goals.” This should be a person that you respect and get from the relationship what you want,” Carey says. You want to be excited to train with them and feel better physically and mentally after each training session.

## 6. WHAT ARE YOUR PAYMENT PLANS AND CANCELLATION POLICY?

Hiring a personal trainer is an investment. Having a clear understanding of pricing and cancellation details upfront and in writing can eliminate any awkward misunderstandings. “Many trainers will offer different price structures based on your financial commitment to training with them,” Carey says.

Your trainer should be able to provide all of this information to you in writing. “It’s even a good idea for both of you to sign a contract that clearly outlines the financial expectations of both sides.”

## 7. WHAT KIND OF RESULTS CAN I EXPECT?

Results take time and don’t come overnight. “A trainer who makes unrealistic promises is setting you up for disappointment.” Based on your goals, Carey advises, “your trainer should be able to give you a general idea of where you will be in one month, three months, and six months if you stick to the plan.”

## ALSO: LOOK FOR THESE QUALITIES IN A PERSONAL TRAINER

Besides asking those seven questions, looking for important qualities in a trainer will also set you up for success.

First up: Does this train show any type of empathy? “You want them to have

known what it feels like to go through this journey and that they care,” Pippin states. The journey you take when changing your body although rewarding can be hard at times. It takes dedication and hard work which isn’t always easy.

Another quality to look for is amazing communication skills. “Not only during coaching but also in being totally upfront about what they’ll be providing,” he adds.

The same goes for how the trainer talks with you during a session. “You want a trainer that knows how to effectively communicate what it is they’re trying to show you,” says Pippin. “You don’t want someone who’s constantly spitting “techno-babble” at you to describe something,” he adds.

## **BONUS: PERSONAL TRAINERS RED FLAGS**

When in session, you want a trainer who clearly shows he or she is out for your best interest, and providing you with all of their attention; anything less may be a red flag. Here, Pippin gives two important indicators for you to look out for:

1. When you’re explaining your goals, and they’re not listening to you but instead putting more effort into trying to sell you a membership or even supplements right out of the gate, move on to the next trainer.
2. If they’re constantly on their phone during your session, make that your final session with them.

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