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Wanted: Qualified Personal Trainer

By [LaRue Novick](#) | Published 12/21/2005 | [Fitness](#) | [Unrated](#)

10 Questions You Can Ask When Looking for the Right Personal Trainer

Do you feel lost in a sea of iron machines and heavyweight bodybuilders at the sight of barbells and exercise balls freak you out because you have NO IDEA what they are? Are you ready to step up your game but feel you need a little coaching? It may be time to hire a personal trainer.

But, before you dart out and hire someone, you want to know who you're hiring. "Personal training can cost thousands of dollars, so if you're going to do that, then you should ask some questions," says Lisa Dougherty, a certified personal trainer of more than 10 years who lives in Costa Mesa and trains at Newport Workout. "I'm not afraid to."

It's best to meet in person before you hire anyone because you want to know if you're a good fit. If you notice the trainer has his or her mind on anything but you—i.e. he's staring at his muscles in the mirror or she doesn't make eye contact because she's checking out the rest of the gym—then move on.

We asked local certified personal trainers why the following questions were important and what they had to say:

1. What is your fitness and educational background?

A college degree in physiology or anatomy is a good start, but it doesn't necessarily mean the trainer is knowledgeable of how the body works, but it does mean he or she knows how to properly train. An education in fitness training from college or through a certification process helps round out a trainer's abilities to train effectively. "Someone who has a degree in fitness training will most likely have more knowledge on things like health and safety, disease, training protocols, how muscles work and physiology of the body," says Kristy Manuel, a certified trainer with more than 20 years experience in and around Mission Viejo. "A degreed trainer is far less likely to get fads in training or put a client through a workout that might cause injury."

2. What certification(s) do you hold?

All agree that it's best if trainers hold a certification from one or more of the following: American Council on Exercise (ACE), the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA), or the International Fitness Trainers Association (IFIT).

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3. Do you keep up with continuing education in the fitness you a member of a trade association for your industry?

"The training world changes and a good trainer wants to keep abreast of new forms of exercise," says Cori Manning, a certified trainer who works at Advanced Fitness Innovations in Irvine. Belonging to a trade association makes trainers more accountable and on top of new information.

4. How often do you train clients?

Many experts in the field suggest you seek someone who trains at least 40 hours a week. "Because then you know they're doing this full time and really involved in it," says Dougherty. You want a consistent trainer. Someone who only does it part time, might not be as good as someone who does it every day.

5. Do you do the same workout for every client?

Fitness trainers worth their weight in muscle can customize a training program just for you based on your needs and goals. And, "they should be designing training programs based on their clients' progress to help them meet their fitness goals quickly and effectively," says Noah Hodgkin, a certified personal trainer based in Huntington Beach.

6. Do you require a physical, health screening or some type of clearance from my doctor?

Several medical conditions or past injuries can affect a person's participation in a personal training program. A personal trainer needs to know all the details of a client's medical history, including any medication the client is taking.

7. Are you certified in CPR and first aid?

While emergencies are rare, it's best if the trainer knows these basic first aid skills. "You have to be prepared. You never know what's going to happen," says Dougherty.

8. How much do you charge and what is your cancellation policy?

Trainers charge anywhere from \$35 to \$100 or more per hour. Some charge more for nutrition programs, body fat tests, shopping for equipment, while others charge a flat rate for all these services. Call around to other trainers' rates to make sure you're not getting ripped off. All trainers charge a cancellation fee. It's best to know everything up front. If possible, get the contract in writing.

9. Do you carry liability insurance?

Personal trainers should carry liability insurance because accidents can occur, though not very often. Coverage would at least protect the trainer should something happen.

10. Can you supply references of previous or current client

Trainers should gladly offer references. If they don't, run! Serious can help a potential client better understand a trainer's personalit before beginning a training regime and I think most references pr fair assessments of their trainer's skills and services," Hodgins say.

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