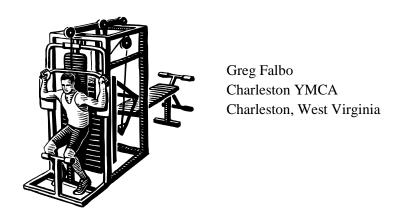
Personal Trainer



How long have you been a Personal Trainer?

I have worked at the YMCA, Health and Fitness Center for six years now. I train members in exercise techniques and design exercise programs. I became certified through the American Council on Exercise (ACE) as a personal trainer in May 1998 and began working with clients officially in June of 1998.

What got you interested in this field?

I enjoy working with people. Helping them learn to better their lives through exercise is a thrill for me. I am very appreciative of the changes that exercise has made in my life, and I enjoy sharing that with others. In addition, I earn a higher wage now that I am a certified personal trainer.

What are the qualifications for a PT?

Qualifications vary from facility to facility. Generally, certification from one of the recognized organizations is enough to gain entrance to the field. I became certified through one of the most widely recognized and accessible agencies (American Council on Exercise). There are other organizations that are respected within the profession such as the American College of Sports Medicine. Unfortunately, there are many other organizations offering certifications that are substantially less respected within the profession. The best advice is to check with your potential employer and find out what agencies they recommend.

A good knowledge base in the areas of exercise techniques, kinesiology, anatomy and physiology, nutrition, and to a certain degree, counseling. A certification is no substitute for experience in the gym, a college education in the biological sciences or exercise sciences, or simply life experiences. My 20 years of fitness training and my degree in Biology prepared me well for this career.

This career requires skills and personality traits that cannot be taught or acquired through any of the professional organizations. The most highly degreed trainer with a wall full of certifications will not be able to retain clients if he or she is not personable, thoughtful, and caring in dealing with clients. Good people skills are essential to the job.

Are there different levels in job ranking of Personal Trainers?

There exists a hierarchy within the field; that is based on experience and education. Positions are available in management for experienced trainers. Possibilities exist to open their own facilities specializing in one-on-one training. Two examples in our area are "One-On-One Personal Training Programs" and "Innovative Fitness", both of which are among the high-end facilities devoted to exclusive personal training. Of course, there are various specializations within the field; there are those who specialize in working with older adults, youth, children or athletes. Sports-specific training is becoming very popular among tennis and golf enthusiasts. These types of programs will increase in development as we learn more about improving performance through specific training techniques.

What do you like most about your job?

I truly enjoy seeing people discover the strengths within themselves. I enjoy being a part of helping them overcome those obstacles that hold them back in various aspects of their lives. I like to see the increased confidence and self-assuredness that fitness provided my clients.

What do you like least about your job?

Occasionally I will encounter a difficult client who simply wants results without giving the necessary effort. Nothing worthwhile comes easily, and that includes fitness. Probably my biggest disappointment is putting a great deal of effort and energy into a client, and then having them give up on themselves prematurely.

What are your expectations of all your clients?

I like for clients to work hard when they're with me, pay attention to what I tell them and attempt to stick to a diet and exercise program throughout the week. It is almost impossible to make positive changes to one's body without the proper dietary changes. Exercise alone can help people see some results, but the best transformations arise from the proper combination of diet, cardiovascular exercise, resistance training, flexibility training, and rest.

What is the average pay?

The average pay for trainers in our area is \$15-30 per hour. A full-time trainer can earn from \$30,000 to \$60,000 at these rates. Most, however, are employed on a part-time basis, either as a sideline to their other work, or as a part-time job while in school. Of course, earnings are based usually on commissions of clients' payments. In most cases, there is no allowance for time spent researching or preparing exercises for one's clients. When those additional hours are factored into one's pay, the hourly pay is reduced considerably. Personally, I probably put in an additional half

hour at no charge for every hour I am actually paid. Sometimes this is an extra fifteen or twenty minutes working with the client one-on-one, and at other times it comes in the form of research for a particular technique. I consider it a donation of my time in order to provide the best possible service.

What is the most an individual can make as a PT? Do you think the pay is better in state, or out of state?

Charleston is definitely a small market and trainers will earn substantially less than in the bigger markets. The Charleston YMCA charges \$30 an hour for training. Nautilus is about the same price but the more exclusive clubs are considerably more. These are fair prices in this market, although one might expect to pay \$50,\$75 or \$100 an hour in the bigger cities. I've heard of trainers in Los Angeles and Manhattan who travel to their clients' offices or homes, bringing equipment to them. They may charge \$200-\$300 a session in these locations. However, the average price of a training session nationally is roughly \$50 per hour.

What tips would you recommend for someone who wants to become a Personal Trainer?

Become a voracious reader of exercise manuals, anatomy texts, kinesiology texts, and bodybuilding magazines. Check out the training sites on-line. Be open to new techniques and ideas. There isn't one perfect routine or exercise. What works for you personally might not work for your clients. Nothing is absolute in this field and there are far too many trainers and gym-rats who are absolutely sure that their methods are the only right methods. Finally, don't let your ego get in the way of offering the best service to your clients.

Interviewed by Lamont Moore for a College 101 assignment on 04/01.