

Shape Up Your Career

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Want to make the world a healthier place? A career in fitness training allows you to do just that

All those who have adopted various fitness methods to get in shape usually have one basic complaint. After the first few attempts, they lose the motivation to continue their workout and accept that they'd rather spend an evening with a bucket of chocolate ice cream than a demanding treadmill. This is where a fitness trainer steps in. On paper, the primary responsibility of a fitness trainer is to instruct their clients through a recommended exercise routine (pilates, aerobics, weights, etc) and help them reach optimum fitness levels. However, in reality, the job demands much more than instructional abilities. A fitness trainer needs to ensure that his/her client selects the right workout, sets a clear goal and consistently works towards that goal. Most often, meeting the last criteria can be the most challenging.

Scope in India

Our sedentary lifestyles and dependence on fast (junk) food has created a simultaneous increase in the number of victims of obesity as well as the cautious fitness freaks. Either way, this means that more clients for a fitness trainer and the opportunities in this field will only grow further. In fact, according to a recent report, the fitness industry in India is slated to grow by 20 to 30 per cent annually.

Sunil Kudva, owner of Elite Fitness, has more than fourteen years of experience in the field of fitness training. He says, "The fitness industry in India is still in a nascent stage; it is nowhere as developed or streamlined as at international levels. It is a budding industry with plenty of potential for growth and it is only going to expand. For a fitness trainer who is willing to use his brains along with brawn, the industry is very promising!"

Job Opportunities

Opportunities are plenty in this field and one can diversify into many other related avenues as a fitness trainer. One option is working with health clubs, gymnasiums and other fitness institutes as a trainer. If you have special training in a particular field such as martial arts, kickboxing, pilates, etc, you can use that to your advantage by offering classes in these specific fitness forms.

If being confined to a gym has you longing for fresh air, you can opt to be a sports fitness trainer. The need for specialised facilities for our athletes is gradually being acknowledged and acted upon. So if the idea of keeping the athletes of our nation in shape excites you, jump into this profession. Your contributions might help us bag more medals at the next Olympics!

If you're picky about who you work up a sweat for, you also have the freedom of choosing your clients as a personal trainer. Once you establish a dependable reputation for yourself, you can decide to exclusively train film stars and other celebrities. But while these stars might be lavish in their expenditure, they can also be unrealistic in their demands.

Remuneration

The entry level salary of a fitness trainer can be humbling (around Rs. 12,000 per month) but with time, your earnings can grow substantially. As you gain experience and credibility, you can earn anything from Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 1 lakh or more per month. There is scope for making money from various sources in this field (weekend classes, personal training sessions, guest training, etc).

As a successful personal trainer, you can earn on an hourly basis (from Rs. 400 to Rs. 1000 per hour).

Skills Set

If you expect your clients to manage 50 push-ups, you need to be able to show them how it's done. Therefore, it is also essential for you to constantly be in good shape as your clients need like to visualise the results they can hope to achieve. Accurate knowledge of the human body such as BMI (body mass index), cardiovascular levels, nutritional requirements, etc is also necessary.

In addition to your body, your interpersonal skills need to be in good shape as well. You have to create a bond with your clients for them to value your advice and instructions. The world of fitness is dynamic with frequent developments and workouts entering the industry, so while you train your body to keep up with rigorous exercises, make sure your mind keeps up with the latest developments as well.

Perks and Challenges

According to Sunil Kudva, the biggest perk one enjoys as a fitness trainer is that it allows you to maintain your own health. "One also meets lots of interesting people on a day to day basis, so the work is social and interactive. There is rarely a dull moment in our day. Afternoon naps can be seen as another necessary perquisite!," he explains.

"This industry has its fair share of challenges as well," says Sunil. "If you are a freelance trainer and you fall sick or are injured, there is no income till you recover", he adds.

Educational Qualifications

To enter this profession, you can either apply for a professional degree in physical education or opt for a certificate course. A number of institutes offer programmes in fitness training which range from two months to a year in duration. If you want to specialise in a particular field such as pilates or martial arts, you can find courses for the same in your city. However, ensure you train under a certified instructor as many people have found ways to exploit the opportunities in this industry.

A Word of Advice

For the fitness trainers of tomorrow, Sunil Kudva offers a piece of advice, "Think hard before you decide to enter this field. It looks good from outside, but it's hard work both in effort and time. To be successful, you have to always be on your toes and engage in continuous education. It's the knowledge you have that gives you success with your clients."

So if you love your workouts, go ahead and spread the joy by entering the adrenaline-pumping world of a fitness trainer.

Course Canvas

- Gold's Gym Fitness Institute, Mumbai
- GFFI Fitness Academy, New Delhi
- Reebok Fitness Trainer Program, New Delhi
- Lakshmbai National University of Physical Education, Gwalior
- Better Fitness For You (institutes all over India)