

Personal Training: 3 Keys to Training Clients in Their Homes

When considering your options as a personal trainer, one of the very first things to decide is WHERE you are going to train your clients. The most obvious answer for most trainers is to get a job at a local fitness facility and train clients there. This is certainly an option, and one that is recommended especially in the beginning of your career. The structure and experience that you will get by working at a successful gym or fitness center is invaluable for a new personal trainer. However, there are drawbacks to working with your clients at a gym, and some clients will be unwilling or unable to workout at a local facility. Don't lose those clients by not having other options! Working out with your clients in their homes is an option for any trainer, and by offering this option to your clients you can increase your potential client base by a dramatic number, and you may even decide to exclusively offer home personal training. In order to decide if this type of business model is for you, there are several points to consider, and they include time management, exercise modalities to be used, and business resources that are available.

Time Management Managing your time and your schedule is a critical consideration when deciding whether or not to work with clients in their homes. Unlike working at a facility, the amount of time that you need to dedicate to each client is increased, sometimes to the point of even doubling the time spent for each client session. For example, let's use a standard one-hour training session as our business model for this discussion. Although many trainers are utilizing different training times with their clients these days, one hour is still a good time frame to use for your scheduling reference. You want to remember that as a home personal trainer, you can be on a tight deadline to get from one place to the next, so you don't want to schedule your sessions back-to-back like you can when you are working at a fitness facility. You must also factor in your travel time to get to your client's home, as well as to get to the home of the following client, the client after that, and so on. If you live in an even reasonably populated area, you will have to allow at least 15 minutes of driving time to and from every client's home, and sometimes as much as 30 minutes per client, depending on the size of the geographic area that you train in. Using our one-hour training session as an example, just one training session can cost you as much as 2 hours of your time. A standard 8-hour workday will now only allow you to train between 4 and 6 clients, depending on where they live in relation to your starting point, as well as in relation to each other. Your best bet whenever possible is to set up your clients in a roughly straight line, or possibly a circle that brings you back to your starting point at the end of the day. The last thing that you want to do is set up a client who lives 30 minutes north of your starting point followed immediately by a client who lives 30 minutes south of your starting point. Not only will you eat up massive amounts of time driving to and from your client's homes, but you will put serious mileage on both your car as well as your wallet at the gas station! More on that in the Business Resources section below.

Exercise Modalities The next thing to consider is the type of training that you will be doing with your clients in their homes. Unless they have a full fitness facility set up - which is rare - it is very likely that you will have to come up with ways to put them through a vigorous workout without the massive amount of equipment that is available at a full-size fitness facility. In order to put together these home workouts, you need to address the two different energy pathways that your clients will need to use during their workouts: aerobic and anaerobic.

Anaerobic Workouts Although many trainers are used to the massive resources available at a local gym, getting your clients a variety-filled and intense anaerobic workout in their home is actually easier than most would think. With nothing more than an exercise ball and a portable set of dumbbells, you can take your clients through the full range of motion and exertion on almost the same scale that is afforded those clients training at a gym. If you are just starting out in the industry, or are simply used to working your clients out at a fitness facility, you should do some research on the Internet for dumbbell workouts, bodyweight workouts, functional training, and sport-specific training. Those 4 keyword combinations alone will net you hundreds of websites with free or low-cost resources that will teach you thousands of exercises that can be done with little or no equipment. The key to getting your clients a good anaerobic workout at home is not the type of equipment that is used, or the actual amount of weight that is moved, but rather the INTENSITY of the workout. A bit of trial and error will teach you how to take a client through their paces in a safe but intense manner that will leave most people ready to call it quits in 30 minutes or less!

Aerobic Workouts Taking your clients through appropriate and effective aerobic workouts can happen on many levels. The 2 obvious differences are going to be whether they get their aerobic activity during their session, or if you assign them activities to do after you leave. You could also do a combination of both, depending on the needs and the fitness level of the client. If you are going to take your clients through an aerobic workout during their session, you can either incorporate "heart rate maintenance" exercises into the workout itself, or you can get the anaerobic exercises out of the way, and then move into an aerobic workout for the second half of the session. Just remember that if your goal is to keep your clients inside their target heart rate zone, there will be very little rest time in between exercises. However, before you blindly go forcing all of your clients to stay inside their target heart rate zone for the entire session, consider the fitness goal of the client, and the metabolically intense benefits of structured strength training compared to a session when you just make sure they are sweating the whole time! Another option for your client's cardio is to have them do it on their own after the end of the training session. Obviously they still need your guidance on what to do, how to track their heart rate, and how long they should perform the activity, but not all clients will actually need you to stay there and guide them during the activity. Also, it is not uncommon for people to own a piece of cardiovascular training equipment such as a treadmill, elliptical trainer, stair-stepper, etc. Nonetheless, most clients will still need some specific guidance on how to maximize the benefits from the type of equipment that they have access to. Things like interval training, cross training, and training at different heart rate levels are all things that you should educate your clients on, especially if they are going to be doing cardio on their own.

Business Resources You must also consider the business resources that you will need access to when training clients in their homes. The time factor has already been discussed, and you should also consider the daily expenses involved in this type of training model. These include equipment expenses, "on the road" expenses, and auto expenses. Equipment expenses should be minimal. You may have an initial cost, but after your initial purchases, all of those assets are reusable. Basic items for home training include an adjustable set of dumbbells and an exercise ball at a bare minimum. It would also be a good idea to have a roll-up exercise mat, a jump rope, and any other items needed for the type of activities that your clients will be engaging

in. A great cardio idea for clients training at home is boxing drills. If you were to utilize that type of training, then a decent set of protective gloves for the clients would be in order, as well as target mats that you hold for them to strike during their drills. In all cases, the items that you own stay with you, and they are simply taken from one client's house to the next. It is a great idea to have your clients eventually buy their own gear, however, which keeps you from having to tote arm loads of equipment into and out of their houses day after day. Also, depending on the type of program you put them on, they may use some of their own equipment in between training sessions. "On the Road" expenses include food and drinks while you are traveling. Depending on your schedule, you will be on the road anywhere from 2 to 12 hours at a time! In those cases, you will obviously need to plan healthy places to eat along the way, or keep portable meals in your vehicle each day. In any event, make sure that you consider the cost of eating away from home as part of your business expenses. Auto expenses are potentially the biggest expense that you will have to face in order to train people at home. The wear and tear on your vehicle - although accountable on your taxes - can still be a drain on your financial resources. You have to keep your vehicle insured, fueled up, and in good working order at all times. The last thing that you want to do is be late for a client session because your car broke down, or you ran out of gas! Also, at anywhere from \$1.50 to \$2.50 per gallon, gas can get expensive if you put in a lot of miles every day.

Conclusion As you can see, there are many considerations when deciding whether or not to train clients in their homes, and you must weigh those considerations against the benefit of being "free" from the gym trainer's normal boundaries, and instead being in charge of your own day to day business. In return, you can command higher per session fees for home training. Since you are saving your clients a lot of driving time and gym expenses, as well as giving them an opportunity to get healthy in the privacy of their own homes, it is not unheard of for a home trainer to charge \$75 to \$100 or more per session. Figure in scheduling issues, the exercise program that you will have your clients on, and the resources needed, and decide for yourself if this type of training program will work for your business!

About the Author

Offering retro trainers from addidas, nike and reebok for both men and children. Sizes and prices are in United Kingdom.

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