



SHAREABLE RESOURCE

Training Trends—Which One Is Right for You?

by Grace T. DeSimone, B.A.

There are so many training opportunities offered in today’s market; there are certainly one or two that will suit your fitness needs and desires. Use this guide to help you understand the push and pull of these trends and find your best fit.

Personal Training — This style of training is led by a certified personal trainer and is designed to focus on you, your exercise

ambitions, physical limitations, and your performance. You should expect your trainer to discuss your health history, goals, and your previous fitness experiences. Some cardiovascular, strength, and mobility tests should be performed to establish a baseline to measure improvements. Personal training is ideal if you are preparing for a specific goal, (golf season, entering a race, climbing Kilimanjaro, etc.) want to achieve your goals faster, and most importantly want to learn how to exercise safely and correctly. If you have limitations (*i.e.*, hip replacement) or have a condition that warrants additional attention (osteoporosis, high blood pressure, etc.), an ACSM certified personal trainer is an ideal option. This is the most expensive option and even if you opt for a few sessions to point you in the right direction or a check-up now and then, you will reap the benefits of an educated eye to tweak your plan and performance. Because your sessions are scheduled by appointment, you will be held accountable both emotionally and financially, which will keep you on track. Although some of you may enjoy laser-focused attention, it’s not for everyone; however, establishing a relationship with a reputable trainer you like and trust will serve you well.

Group Personal Training — Often referred to as small group training, this style provides the opportunity for you to experience the benefits of a personal trainer by sharing the cost and the attention of the trainer with a few other participants. In this format, you will have less time and attention from the trainer, but you gain the added bonus of camaraderie and friendly competition from the other participants. If you know your way around basic fitness equipment, enjoy being around others while you exercise, and don’t require custom modifications, this can be a great option. If you have a lot of questions or physical limitations, you should try meeting with a personal trainer until you



Training Style	Staff to Participant Ratio	Cost	Personal Attention (Supervision?)	Sense of Community	Accountability
Personal training	1:1	\$\$\$\$	High	Low	High
Group personal training	1:5	\$\$\$	Mid	High	Mid
Group training	1:6+	\$\$	Low	High	Low



learn the ropes, then discuss group personal training with your trainer. Have a group of friends or colleagues that can exercise together? This is a wonderful option for enhancing your social engagements.

Group Training — Led by a personal trainer or group exercise instructor, sessions are uniquely curated for each club or studio. Workouts are typically categorized by the type of equipment used, which may include cycling, kettlebells, light weights, heavy weights, treadmills, rowing machines, TRX®, boxing, ballet barres, ball, battling ropes, or no equipment at all. The equipment may be used in various combinations for a circuit-style workout (treadmill, rowers, and dumb bells) or drill-based exercises (push-ups for a minute). Most group workouts feature a vibe and highlight music or lighting that adds to the experience; others are “outcome-based” using heart rate monitors or effort points to coach and inspire your progress. These are “one-size-fits-most” fitness methods that appeal to participants who are looking for training with a certain type of equipment (kettlebells,

cycling, etc.) or seeking a particular fitness method or discipline (dance-based, sports-inspired, etc.). These workouts are high on motivation and excitement and low on personal attention but the most wallet friendly of the guided training options. Having some base experience, learning good form, and understanding your limits will help you succeed in group training. According to ACSM’s 2019 Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends, group training ranked number two making it an extremely popular option.

Ideally, having a combination approach is best. Personal training combined with group training or group personal training will give you the best of all worlds. You could start with personal training and graduate to a group personal training option or start with personal training and add a group training option. Remember, the best type of workout is the one that you do! Enjoy.

Grace T. DeSimone, B.A., is the national group fitness director for Optum. She and her group fitness teams manage group exercise classes in worksite wellness programs across the country. She serves on the executive council of ACSM’s Committee on Certification and Registry Boards. She also is the editor for ACSM’s Resource Manual for Group Exercise Instructors (2011) and is the 2016 IDEA Health & Fitness Association Program Director of the Year. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Dance from Hunter College, City University of New York, in New York, NY, and is an ACSM Certified Group Exercise Instructor® and an ACSM Certified Personal Trainer®.