

2018 SOC Revision - 79 FR 29619
Coalition for the Registration of Exercise Professionals
Recommendations for the Classification, Title and Definition of Exercise
Professionals

Overview

The Coalition for the Registration of Exercise Professionals (CREP) recommends updating the current title, definition and classification for Fitness Trainers and Aerobics Instructors (39-9031) to better reflect the diversity of exercise professional roles and the important position they have as professionals on the healthcare team who provide leadership and expertise in the adoption and maintenance of active, healthy lifestyles through the design and delivery of exercise programs for health, fitness and sport performance. This is, in part, a result of the shift in health policy and healthcare priorities towards preventative care. This is highlighted in a large body of scientific and medical evidence that demonstrates the health benefits and cost savings associated with healthy, active lifestyles. The exercise professional's skills as a provider of physical activity and lifestyle-related preventative health programming and services, in partnership with other allied health and medical professions, play an important role in decreasing physical inactivity and its' associated chronic disease conditions in the United States.

About CREP

CREP is a not-for-profit organization composed of professional associations that offer NCCA-accredited exercise certifications (National Commission of Certifying Agencies). Coalition members are committed to advancing the fitness profession and to earning recognition as a health provider for practitioners that have passed a competency-based exam. Primary to the mission of the Coalition is to provide individuals of all ages and abilities with resources and leadership to assist in safely and effectively reaching their goals of achieving more active, healthy lifestyles through movement, physical activity or exercise for recreation or sport performance. CREP advances its mission by maintaining the United States Registry of Exercise Professionals (USREPS), an internationally recognized registry of exercise professionals in the United States, and as an advocate for the exercise professional who holds NCCA-accredited certification on issues that pertain to regulation, access and scope of work. For more information, please visit: www.usreps.org.

Recommended Changes

Title Change: We recommend that the title be changed from Fitness Trainers and Aerobics Instructors to Exercise Trainers and Group Exercise Instructors to better reflect the services provided by workers in the occupation to consumers with health, fitness, or athletic/vocational performance goals.

Classification Change: We recommend that Fitness Trainers and Aerobics Instructors be moved from Major Group 39 (Personal Care and Service Occupations) to Major Group 29 (Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations) to better reflect their role, capabilities

and the services they provide in alignment with other allied health and medical professionals to improve health through structured exercise programs.

29-9000 Other Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations

29-9090 Miscellaneous Health Practitioners and Technical Workers

29-909X Exercise Trainers and Group Exercise Instructors

Definition Change: We recommend the following definition be utilized for Exercise Trainers and Group Exercise Instructors:

Develop and implement individualized approaches to exercise using proactive exercise programs, including technical coaching and instruction in physical fitness and conditioning for an individual or an organized group of individuals who are working towards health, fitness or/and sports performance goals. Excludes teachers classified in 25-0000 Education, Training and Library Occupations, "Coaches and Scouts" (27-2022) and "Athletic Trainers" (29-9091), Exercise Physiologists (29-1128), Physical Therapists (29-1123), Recreational Therapists (29-1125).

Illustrative Examples: Aerobics Instructor, Group Exercise Instructor, Health Fitness Instructor, Personal Trainer, Pilates Teacher, Yoga Instructor

Justification and Supporting Information

1. Nature of the Work Performed

Exercise trainers and group exercise instructors lead, instruct, and motivate individuals or groups in exercise activities, including cardiorespiratory exercise (exercises for the heart, lungs and blood system), strength training (musculoskeletal), and flexibility. They work with people of all ages and skill levels in a variety of settings.

Exercise trainers design and lead individualized exercise programs based on an individual's health history, the recommendations or guidance of referring health and medical professionals, various fitness assessments conducted by the exercise professional and/or the programmatic goals of the participant. Group exercise instructors apply similar exercise programming principles to develop and lead exercise classes in various formats for groups of individuals at all levels of fitness and skill. Exercise programs are assessed and modified regularly based on progress towards the participants goals, changes in health status, and/or individual or group feedback.

Exercise trainers and group exercise instructors typically perform the following duties:

- Collect health history and other health and fitness related lifestyle data
- Conduct health and fitness assessments to establish baselines, enhance program design and monitor progress
- Work with clients to identify exercise program goals for health, fitness and/or sport performance
- Design exercise programs that are aligned with the client's unique health, fitness, or sport performance goals and capabilities. Design exercise classes for a variety of group fitness formats including dance-based, yoga, core mat classes, sports conditioning, indoor cycling, circuit training, and a variety of other formats.
- Demonstrate and instruct how to perform various exercises and lead exercise routines

- Supervise individual exercise programs and group fitness classes, and provide feedback on technique to minimize risk of injury and improve fitness
- Maintain records of client exercise programs, monitor progress of individual clients and/or group classes, and adapt programs as needed
- Provide alternative exercises or exercise modification during workouts or classes for different levels of fitness and skill
- Explain and enforce safety rules and regulations regarding health-related exercise parameters, fitness, sports, recreational activities, and the use of exercise equipment
- Assess exercise equipment, space, and environmental factors prior to each workout or group class to identify necessary modifications for safe and effective exercise participation
- Provide clients with information and resources about nutrition, weight control, and lifestyle issues that impact fitness-related health behavior changes
- Coach individuals and class participants through exercise to promote task completion, self-efficacy for exercise, and program adherence
- Follow business and healthcare regulations for the protection of confidential information

In addition to core duties in the previous list, other duties that may be performed by exercise trainers and group exercise instructors from time to time include:

- Consult with referring health and medical professionals regarding a client's exercise program
- Collaborate with physicians, physical therapists, athletic trainers, registered dietitians, and other health and medical professionals to provide individualized and group exercise programs as part of an allied health team
- Respond to emergency situations and provide cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), automated external defibrillator (AED), and emergency first aid if needed

Practitioners in the occupation offer many different programs and exercise activities for clients; however they often specialize in only a few areas. The following are some types of exercise trainers and instructors:

Personal Trainers / Personal Fitness Trainers: Work one-on-one and in small groups with clients who are apparently healthy or have medical clearance to exercise. They may provide services in any number of settings including membership-based fitness facilities, colleges, workplace or medical wellness centers, studios, public open space, or in client's homes. Personal trainers assess clients' current health risk factors and level of physical fitness for safe participation, help them set realistic goals, and design, implement and modify individualized programs to help them reach their fitness goals.

Example of a detailed job task analysis for personal trainers can be found at:

<http://www.acefitness.org/fitness-certifications/pdfs/CPT-Exam-Content-Outline.pdf>

Group Exercise Instructors: Design, organize, lead, and modify group exercise classes, which can include dance-based exercise, yoga, core mat work, sports conditioning, indoor cycling, circuit training, and a variety of other formats.

Instructors are responsible for selecting, sequencing and cuing exercises, determining appropriate exercise modifications and progressions, and designing choreography as appropriate based on class format. Instructors also determine the need for and appropriate selection of music and exercise equipment based on class format.

An Example of a detailed job task analysis for a Group Exercise Instructor can be found at:

<http://www.acefitness.org/fitness-certifications/pdfs/GFI-Exam-Content-Outline.pdf>

Specialized Fitness Instructors: Design and lead individuals and groups in specialized training methods such as Pilates or yoga. Instructors teach the exercises, movements and positions of the particular method. They monitor participants to identify areas for improvement, provide feedback to ensure correct form to minimize the risk of injury, and provide modifications based on participants needs. Instructors working in medical fitness facilities provide complementary exercise programs as part of a comprehensive healthcare plan for individuals who have received or are receiving treatment for cardiovascular, metabolic, orthopedic, or other conditions.

Examples of detailed job task analyses for Specialized Fitness Instructors can be found at:

[http://www.pilatesmethodalliance.org/files/documentlibrary/Certification/2012-PMA-Role-Delineation-Report%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.pilatesmethodalliance.org/files/documentlibrary/Certification/2012-PMA-Role-Delineation-Report%20(1).pdf)

<http://www.acefitness.org/fitness-certifications/pdfs/AHFS-Exam-Content-Outline.pdf>

Fitness Directors: Are exercise practitioners with oversight for the fitness-related departments of facilities where exercise professionals are employed. They have supervisory responsibilities including: staff hiring, scheduling and professional development, oversight of group and personal training programs, services and schedules. They are often involved in the selection of exercise equipment for the facility.

There is not a formal job task analysis for management roles in this occupation.

2. Attributes of the work performed that make the occupation distinct from other detailed occupations in the SOC

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook similar occupations that align with fitness trainers include: Athletic Trainers and Exercise Physiologists, Physical Therapists Assistants and Aides, and Physical Therapists.

(<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/personal-care-and-service/fitness-trainers-and-instructors.htm#tab-7>).

Based upon job descriptions on the aforementioned occupations, Fitness Trainers and Aerobics Instructors would be better represented and grouped within Major Group 29: Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations, specifically under: 29-9000 Other Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations based upon occupational descriptions. Physical Therapists, Exercise Physiologists and Athletic Trainers all have similar, yet distinctive descriptions that adjacent to, and align with, the role of Fitness Trainers and Aerobics Instructors. The exercise programming delivered by the various occupations may

be rehabilitative, preventative or fitness focused depending on the occupation and setting.

The following descriptions for the similar, yet distinct, occupations listed were found in the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010 SOC Definitions

(http://www.bls.gov/soc/soc_2010_definitions.pdf):

29-1123 Physical Therapists: Assess, plan, organize, and participate in rehabilitative programs that improve mobility, relieve pain, increase strength, and improve or correct disabling conditions resulting from disease or injury.

29-1128 Exercise Physiologists: Assess, plan, or implement fitness programs for patients that include exercise or physical activities such as those designed to improve cardiorespiratory function, body composition, muscular strength, muscular endurance, or flexibility. Excludes “Physical Therapists” (29-1123), “Athletic Trainers” (29-9091), and “Fitness Trainers and Aerobics Instructors” (39-9031).

29-9091 Athletic Trainers: Evaluate and advise individuals to assist recovery from or avoid athletic-related injuries or illnesses, or maintain peak physical fitness. May provide first aid or emergency care.

Fitness Trainers and Aerobics Instructors readily align with the previous occupations listed, yet their scope of practice is distinct in that the focus of the services provided is on exercise for preventative health and health promotion versus restorative health. Exercise Professionals currently reside in the minor group titled Other Personal Care and Service Workers (39-9000) and in the broad occupation group, Recreation and Fitness Workers (39-9090). Fitness trainers and aerobics instructors have very little, if anything, in common with the other occupations listed in the minor group or with the only other occupation in their broad group, Recreation Workers.

The shift in health policy and healthcare priorities towards preventative care has resulted in greater recognition of the exercise professional’s skills as a provider of physical activity and lifestyle-related preventative health programming and services in partnership with other allied health and medical professions have become more prominent. The knowledge, skills and abilities of the professionals have not changed since the 2010 SOC revision, however perceptions of fitness as a purely leisure time pursuit have shifted and exercise professionals are increasingly viewed as a valued provider of leadership and expertise for physical activity and exercise programs that can improve population health.

39-9032 Recreation Workers

Conduct recreation activities with groups in public, private, or volunteer agencies or recreation facilities. Organize and promote activities, such as arts and crafts, sports, games, music, dramatics, social recreation, camping, and hobbies, taking into account the needs and interests of individual members.

Illustrative examples: *Camp Counselor, Playground Worker, Activities Aide*

Recreation workers typically do the following:

- Plan, organize, and lead activities for groups or recreation centers
 - Explain the rules of the activities and instruct participants at a variety of skill levels
 - Enforce safety rules to prevent injury
 - Modify activities to suit the needs of specific groups, such as seniors
 - Administer basic first aid if needed
 - Organize and set up the equipment that is used in recreational activities
 - Teach activity participants about the local environment, such as area wildlife
- (<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/personal-care-and-service/recreation-workers.htm#tab-2>)

39-9031 Fitness Trainers and Aerobics Instructors

Instruct or coach groups or individuals in exercise activities. Demonstrate techniques and form, observe participants, and explain to them corrective measures necessary to improve their skills. Excludes teachers classified in 25-0000 Education, Training, and Library Occupations. Excludes "Coaches and Scouts" (27-2022) and "Athletic Trainers" (29-9091).

Fitness Trainers and Aerobics Instructors typically do the following:

- Demonstrate how to carry out various exercises and routines
- Watch clients do exercises and show or tell them correct techniques to minimize injury and improve fitness
- Give alternative exercises during workouts or classes for different levels of fitness and skill
- Monitor clients' progress and adapt programs as needed
- Explain and enforce safety rules and regulations on sports, recreational activities, and the use of exercise equipment
- Give clients information or resources about nutrition, weight control, and lifestyle issues
- Give emergency first aid if needed

(<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/personal-care-and-service/fitness-trainers-and-instructors.htm#tab-2>)

As evidenced above, the comparison of the typical duties listed in the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Handbook, the leisure activities provided by Recreation Workers have a much different focus and set of expected outcomes than those provided by Exercise Trainers and Group Exercise Instructors.

3. Job Titles

The following are the most commonly used job titles:

- Personal Trainer
- Personal Fitness Trainer
- Group Fitness Instructor
- Yoga Teacher
- Exercise Specialist*

- Health Fitness Instructor*
- Pilates Teacher*
- * Not yet included in direct match titles

The following additional titles are currently listed in the direct match titles however are not as common used as those listed above.

- Weight Trainer
- Weight Training Instructor
- Yoga Instructor
- Aerobics Instructor
- Certified Personal Trainer
- Fitness Trainer
- Group Exercise Instructor

4. *Indications of the Number of Jobs or Workers in the Occupation*

Exercise Trainers and Group Exercise Instructors are among the occupations for which data is included in the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Occupational Outlook Handbook. The BLS reports that the occupation accounted for 267,000 jobs in 2012. It can be considered a growth field with growth for the period of 2012-2022 being estimated about average with other occupations demonstrating growth. The number of jobs is expected to increase in that time period by 33,500* to 65,000** over the existing 2012 numbers.

* Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook

<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/personal-care-and-service/fitness-trainers-and-instructors.htm>

** O*NET Online Summary Report for Fitness Trainers and Aerobics Instructors

<http://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/39-9031.00>

5. *Types of Employers*

Exercise Trainers and Group Exercise Instructors work in a wide variety of settings in the health and fitness industry and individuals may work independently in their own business or as an employee. Typical work settings for the occupation and trade organizations that support each setting are as follows:

- Membership-based health and fitness facilities:
 - For-profit health clubs: International Health Racquet and Sportsclub Association (<http://www.ihrsa.org/>)
 - YMCAs: YMCA of the USA (<http://www.ymca.net>)
 - JCCs: Jewish Community Center Association (<http://www.jcca.org>)
- Hospital-based wellness centers: Medical Fitness Association (<http://www.medicalfitness.org>)
- Corporate wellness programs
- University-based fitness facilities: National Intramural and Recreational Sports Association (<http://www.nirsa.org>)
- Private studios: Association of Fitness Studios (<http://www.afsfitness.com>)
- Home-based

- Community-based facilities including faith-based institutions
- School and professional sports settings
- Military fitness and recreation facilities
- Municipal and County fitness and recreation facilities

6. *Education and Training*

There are a variety of preparatory pathways into the occupation for exercise trainers and group exercise instructors. The level of education and training necessary is often dependent on the work setting and the client populations that the occupational role serves. Certification is often required by employers in addition to the completion of a vocational education or degree program. Supplemental modality-specific training may be required to provide certain equipment-based programs or group exercise formats.

The most common education and training program types include:

1. Distance vocational education programs which are self-directed and may take from 12 weeks up to one year to complete.
2. Career school certificate programs that range from 12 weeks to two years in length.
3. College academic programs in exercise science at the associates, bachelors, and graduate degree levels. Many of these are accredited by the Commission on the Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) (<http://www.caahep.org>) through the Commission on Accreditation for Exercise Science (www.coaes.org).

The educational programs above are composed of both courseware and internship experiences to develop the following knowledge, skills and abilities required for the occupation:

- Exercise science (i.e. anatomy, physiology, exercise physiology, applied kinesiology, nutrition)
- Client interviews and assessments
- Exercise program design, delivery, modification, and progression
- Class planning and design
- Group leadership and instruction
- Injury prevention and first aid
- Professional conduct, safety, risk management, and legal responsibilities
- Hands-on/practical skills

7. *Licensing*

At this time there are no licensure requirements to practice as an exercise professional.

7. *Tools and Technologies*

Exercise Trainers and Group Exercise Instructors use a variety of tools and technologies to help individuals and groups work toward and achieve their goals for health, fitness and sport performance. These tools and technologies can be grouped into the following categories:

- **Heavy Resistance Training Equipment:** includes all non-portable equipment used to provide external resistance to help individuals increase muscular strength and endurance. Facility-based resistance training equipment includes free weights, secularized equipment, cable-and-pulley resistance systems, apparatus for

- individualized Pilates instruction, apparatus used for body weight exercises such as pull-ups, and non-traditional fitness equipment such as tractor tires and heavy ropes.
- **Portable Equipment:** can be easily taken from one facility to another or to an individual's home, and can often be utilized in group exercise classes. Portable equipment includes stability balls, medicine balls, yoga mats, resistance tubing, suspension trainers, balance trainers, jump ropes, steps, and a variety of other equipment.
 - **Cardiorespiratory Equipment:** is used indoors by individuals to perform low, moderate, and high intensity cardiorespiratory exercise. This equipment includes treadmills, elliptical trainers, indoor cycles, rowing machines, simulated stair machines, and a variety of other modalities of training.
 - **Technology:** includes a number of wearable self-monitoring devices such as heart rate and GPS monitors, pedometers, and multi-function monitors that track steps, caloric expenditure, stairs climbed, and sleep. There are mobile applications that support many of these wearable technologies and other mobile applications that perform many of these same functions, making smart phones viable technology tools that can be used as part of an instructor-led exercise program. Additional technologies used by exercise trainers and group exercise instructors include programs and websites for exercise program development, journaling exercise performance and dietary intake, filming human movement to evaluate exercise techniques, body composition scales.

9. *Professional or Trade Associations and Unions*

There are a variety of professional trade associations that serve the occupation including both broad and job-role specific populations. They include, but are not limited to:

- American College of Sports Medicine: www.acsm.org/join.acsm
- Coalition for the Registration of Exercise Professionals: www.usreps.org
- IDEA Health and Fitness Association: www.ideafit.com
- National Strength and Conditioning Association: www.nasca.org/membership
- Pilates Method Alliance www.pilatesmethodalliance.org
- Yoga Alliance: www.yogaalliance.org

There is no organized labor associated with the occupation.