

**LECTURE 3**

# Health and Safety

**Knowledge & Application  
of Personal Training**

LECTURE

**3**

# Health and Safety

This is quite a formal section because it concerns the law and the legal obligations that every personal trainer and anyone who employs a personal trainer, must adhere to. There are two principal pieces of legislation: the Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 but there are other regulations as well as rules that have been decided through the courts.

At its most basic, the law states that employers have a legal duty to assess the health and safety risks that their employees might be exposed to as well as any people with whom the employee comes into contact during the course of their work. (eg a client being trained by a personal trainer).

As well as this, any self-employed person (eg a personal trainer) must assess health and safety risks both to themselves and any person who comes into contact with them during the course of their work (for example a client). But of course, as with all legal matters, it extends further than that.

A phrase that you will come across frequently with respect to health and safety is “Duty of Care”. As a personal trainer you have a legal duty to provide for the safety and care of yourself and your clients. You must take reasonable measures to protect them from “risks” and “hazards”.

With clients, these might include:

- slipping (on a loose mat or spilt liquid for example).
- tripping (over, say, a piece of equipment).
- It also means being aware and careful when you hand a client equipment (eg a pair of heavy weights or a barbell).
- And of course, there’s the all-important matter which we’ll go into in more detail later, concerning exactly what sort of exercises you give to different clients. Could a certain exercise be dangerous to the health and safety of this particular client?

The Regulations also extend to the environment you work in.

- Is it well-ventilated?
- Is it the right temperature?
- Is it well lit – or does your client have to stumble about in the gloom?
- Is it dusty?

Which brings us to yet another aspect of Health and Safety – covered in the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH). You might think that this doesn’t apply to you – you’re not handling asbestos or bottles of acid. But a dusty environment might bring on a client’s asthma. And you’ll probably use cleaning fluid or toilet bleach at some time. Are they away from where a client might accidentally come into contact with them?

Your Duty of Care means that when you are working in a health and fitness environment you must be aware of all the things that might cause accident or injury to a client or yourself and take measures to prevent such things from happening. If you don’t take these measures and an accident does happen, you could be accused of negligence and if you were taken to court by a client, the court would probably find against you. Inevitably, working in the fitness industry, at some point there is going to be an accident so it is absolutely crucial that you take health and safety seriously.

Having a Health and Safety Policy written down which you show to your clients is good practice and you can see an example below.

- As well as your day-to-day practice (or Normal Operating Procedures as it is called) you need to have in place a policy of what to do in an emergency (called Emergency Operating Procedures)
- What do you do in case of a fire?
- What happens if a client has an accident or a seizure of some kind?
- Do you have a first-aid qualification (essential in the case of a personal trainer). Where is the nearest defibrillator?
- Do you have an accident **book** where the details of accidents are written down. Again, it’s good practise and having one protects you against accusations which may be made well after the accident has happened. (More about this below)

There will be different procedures for different circumstances, but you should know exactly what to do.

# Example of a Health & Safety Policy

The following Health and Safety Policy is for a fitness company with employees.

You can use it as a template and adapt it to suit your personal circumstances, cutting out any words, clauses or even sections that don't apply to you at the time. So, for example if you do not have your own studio but go round to people's houses to do Personal Training with them, then some of the clauses will not be relevant. The same applies if you do not have employees. But, say, if you are training people in your garage which has been fitted out for the purpose, then a great deal of this policy will be relevant.

## Health and Safety Policy

*This is the Health and Safety Policy of: (name of company or if self-employed, the personal trainer)*

### General Statement of Policy

*We are committed to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of our employees and clients, so far as is reasonably practicable, and recognise that the effective management of health and safety is an integral part of our overall business performance.*

**Our policy is to:**

- *Provide adequate control of health and safety risks arising from our work activities.*
- *Consult with our employees and clients on matters affecting their health and safety.*
- *Provide and maintain safe plant and equipment.*
- *Ensure safe handling and use of substances.*
- *Provide information, instruction and supervision for employees and clients.*
- *Ensure all employees and clients are competent to do their tasks and provide them with adequate training.*
- *Prevent accidents and cases of ill health arising from activities we require them to do.*
- *Maintain safe and healthy working conditions.*
- *Review and revise this policy as necessary and at least on an annual basis.*

*Whilst the onus of Health and Safety falls primarily on (name of company or if self-employed, the personal trainer), we encourage everyone using our facilities to take all reasonable care to protect themselves and anyone else affected by their acts or omissions.*

**We expect employees and clients to cooperate with the policy by:**

- *Working safely and efficiently to approved methods and with regard to the safety of themselves and others.*
- *Adhering to the Company's safety procedures and rules.*
- *Reporting all accidents in the proper way and co-operating in the investigation of accidents and measures taken to prevent recurrence.*
- *Reporting all health and safety concerns, possible hazards, defects or dangers to an appropriate person.*

*The successful implementation of this policy requires total commitment of management and employees at all levels.*

Signed: ..... Date: .....

### **Organisation and Responsibilities**

*The overall and final responsibility for health and safety in the company is that of:  
(Insert a name here)*

*The day to day responsibility for ensuring this policy is put into practice is delegated to:  
(Insert a name(s) here)*

*And their deputy is:*

**To ensure the Company adheres to the Health and Safety Policy we will take the following actions:**

#### **Risk Assessments**

- *Complete risk assessments for all activities that pose a significant risk of harm and take appropriate action on the outcomes.*
- *Review risk assessments annually or earlier if work activity or conditions change.*

#### **Equipment**

- *Ensure that all equipment provided by the Company is appropriate and used correctly.*
- *Monitor all work equipment for safety and adequate maintenance.*
- *Schedule the appropriate inspection and testing of portable electrical equipment with an approved supplier.*
- *Identify the relevant health and safety issues when purchasing new equipment and machinery.*
- *Ensure that any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) provided is fit for purpose and all relevant clients and employees are given instruction and training on how to use it.*

#### **Substances**

- *Identify all substances which need a COSHH assessment.*
- *Undertake COSHH assessments and inform all relevant employees.*
- *Ensure that all substances are used and stored safely and in accordance with COSHH guidelines.*

#### **First Aid, Accidents and Incidents**

- *Ensure adequate first aid provision is put in place in the form of trained first aiders and appropriate equipment.*
- *Record accidents and incidents using the correct documentation.*
- *Complete accident and incident investigations and identify causes and measures for prevention.*
- *Report applicable injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences to the relevant Authority.*

#### **Fire and Emergency Arrangements**

- *Provide emergency equipment which is tested and maintained to appropriate standards.*
- *Check escape routes are clear and unlocked.*
- *Ensure employees and visitors are aware of the fire, evacuation and other emergency procedures.*
- *Carry out regular fire and emergency evacuation procedures.*

### **Premises**

- *Provide suitable and adequate maintenance of the facilities provided within the workplace.*
- *Uphold good housekeeping standards.*
- *Provide a suitable and safe working environment for employees with adequate welfare facilities.*
- *Establish and maintain measures to control and manage the risks posed by asbestos.*

### **Occupational Health**

- *Identify potential occupational health risks to employees.*
- *Develop and update procedures to help reduce and control the risks to health through occupational health risks such as Manual Handling.*
- *Provide the relevant equipment, training, resources and working environment to minimise occupational health risks.*
- *Ensure the appropriate support is given to employees who experience an occupational health issue.*

### **Communication, Training and Monitoring**

- *Provide a regular forum for consultation with employees on health and safety matters.*
- *Check working conditions and ensure safe working practices are being followed.*
- *Provide appropriate induction and ongoing health and safety training for all employees, contractors and visitors when relevant.*

# Risk Assessments

Once again, it's a legal requirement (this time from the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999), that you should carry out risk assessments for all clients. This in practice means looking at all the possible risks and hazards that might affect the client before you start the session. And you need to train yourself to do this so that it becomes a habit – something you do automatically. At first, and especially during your training it's good practise to write these risk assessments out but after a while you will become so used to thinking that way that it won't be necessary anymore, particularly if you take your sessions in the same place each time. However, if you find yourself in a new situation (going to someone's house for the first time to train them for example), a written assessment is vital, again not only to safeguard the client but to protect you as well.

Even so, despite the fact that you might have written out a thorough-going risk assessment, it is also best to get used to asking some simple questions of a client before each session.

Things like,

- Have you had any illnesses or injuries since we last met, which I should know about?
- Do you know where the emergency exit is?"
- Is the temperature OK for you?

Obviously, you use your common sense so that you don't simply get annoying. You don't want a response from a client like:

"Yes, I DO know where the emergency exit is. You must have asked me that question twenty times in the last three months!!!"

## **Risk Assessment Form**

Here is a template for you to use. You'll notice that risks are divided into three types: Low, Medium and High. If you decide that something is Low Risk, then you can probably start without much modification; if Medium Risk, then you should take steps to reduce the possibility of something harmful happening, whereas if it is High Risk then you definitely need to adapt the activity before you go ahead with it.

Example:

## Risk Assessment Form

<b>Room No/Area Desk:</b>	Gym training areas
<b>Use of Room:</b>	One to One & Group training. Teaching Personal Training
<b>Department:</b>	
<b>Completed by:</b>	

<b>Date</b>	
<b>Year</b>	

Hazard/Event	Who is affected	Risk Controls	Score		Responsibility	Action Required	Time-scale (1 day) (1wk) (1mth) (3mths) (monthly)	Date Completed or regular checks put in place
			Probable Likelihood	Potential Consequence				
<i>Something that has the potential to cause harm</i>	<i>Staff/Student/Visitor/Disabled/Child/Contractor</i>	<i>Measures in place to prevent the harm being realised</i>				<i>Additional measures to be put in place to prevent the harm being realised</i>		
<b>Exposure</b>								
Music too loud (impaired communication and ear damage)	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	Stereo volume kept reasonable (below 80DBS): just as background noise. Volume easily adjusted	Med	Low	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	Music only adjusted by Staff/Students supervising the gym/Personal trainer renting the studio space	Daily	
Temperature (over-heating by training or coolness leading to cramp etc).	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	Temperature controlled environment (air-con set at 19-21 degrees Celsius) Extractor fans blow in fresh air.	Low	Med	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	Air con only adjusted by Staff supervising.	Daily	
Covid 19 and other any other pandemic related protocols	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	Regular staff meetings and updates from Management. 360 feedback and walk through of services, products and protocols. One point of reference - Government website. New step by step protocols in place and issued to staff. Staff training in house and online. Please see additional paper work for measures. Signage is displayed around both sites to instruct visitors on protocols.	Med	High	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	Continue to follow protocols from management influenced, checked and updated by all necessary interest groups	Daily	
<b>SLIP / TRIP / FALL (from a height/on the level)</b>								
Some gym equipment elevates the client during use	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	All staff on shift supervise any users during and out of sessions. Outside of sessions only staff. All groups will receive an induction on how to use the equipment.	Med	High	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	None	Weekly/monthly	

Poor floor conditions	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	Floors regularly cleaned and maintained via weekly check sheet.	Med	High	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	None	Daily/weekly	
Horseplay, fatigue, misuse of machinery	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	Users supervised at all times by staff, all users are inducted into gym	Med	High	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	Staff to ensure appropriate behaviour in the gym.	Daily	
Obstructed walkways and trailing leads	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	No bags allowed to be stored in walkways of the gym, all staff monitoring gym tidiness during the day. Treadmill cables kept behind machinery. Cleaning sign posted at entrance if cleaning in process.	Low	Med	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	H+S checks completed daily/weekly to monitor this possibility.	Daily	
Protrusions from gym equipment causing injury	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	Awareness created during inductions and tours, machinery placed logically, instructors promoting awareness	Med	High	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	These protrusions are pointed out during every induction. Course tutors cover this in their H+S lessons.	Daily/weekly	

#### MANUAL HANDLING

#### STRUCK BY A MOVING / FLYING / FALLING /STATIONARY OBJECT

Gym equipment collapsing and trapping appendages or body	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	Equipment guarded and routinely maintained	Low	High	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	Annual service of equipment to ensure it remains safe and robust	Daily/weekly/monthly and yearly	
Walk into a wall or object	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	Walls are white and have posters and notice boards high-lighting their position	Med	Med	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	None	Monthly/yearly	
Dropping of weights or equipment or being hit while equipment is being used	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	Clients, Students, staff, inducted prior to use, students supervised by tutors, collars on olympic bars to prevent free fall	Med	High	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	Staff supervising the gym during busy periods to ensure appropriate technique and training.	Daily	
Inserted fingers in equipment, loose clothing getting caught, incorrect use of gym equipment	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	Clients, Students, staff, inducted prior to use, students supervised by tutors, collars on olympic bars to prevent free fall	Med	High	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	Staff supervising the gym during busy periods to ensure appropriate technique and training.	Daily	
Wall mirrors breaking		Mirrors installed by professionals. Mirrors installed against flat wall surface. All those using the gym made aware of bars hitting mirrors.	Low	Med	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	Mirrors are safety mirrors and will not shatter	Daily/weekly	

#### USING EQUIPMENT (Electrical & Other)

Moving equipment parts, inserted fingers,	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	Guards on machines, inductions procedure on joining, cctv, appropriate clothing in gym	Med	Med	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	None		
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Free weights (DB's, BB's, kettlebells, medicine balls, power bags) injury	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	Only used by qualified professionals or when supervised by qualified professionals.	Med	Med	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	None	
Soft tissue injury	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	Inductions for all members, students, staff.	High	Med	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	None. First aid list located at main reception.	Daily/ weekly
Fit balls, bungee, punch bag causing injury	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	Designated ball storage, proper instruction given during inductions, H+S check of balls and equipment daily/ weekly.	Med	Med	All Staff, Personal trainer, clients, students and visitors and those with disabilities	Only used by qualified professionals or when supervised by qualified professionals.	Daily/ weekly

## Risk Assessment Form Explanation

I realise that this risk assessment form may look rather daunting so I'll break it down a bit to make it more understandable. There are two ways you can look at risk assessment: one from the **client's** point of view (how they could get nasty things happening to them). But also from the point of view of the **environment** (the sorts of things in the surroundings that could affect the client and/or injure them, hurt them in some way).

The purpose of a risk assessment is to demonstrate to any external person that you have applied common sense to your environment to try to prevent nasty things happening to clients. Also, it's a great opportunity to highlight obvious and not so obvious hazards that you may not have considered before. This is what you put in the **first** column (the column headed "hazards") eg taking a big piece of equipment such as a barbell into a client's house to train her, could cause you to knock her priceless vase off the mantelpiece and smash it, or she could drop it on the cat and kill it while exercising. This may seem a silly example, but I have observed lots of Zoom sessions where a cat is winding itself round its owner's legs while they are performing exercises. More importantly though, it would show to any external person that you have **thought** about potential hazards when going into someone's house to train them.

Once you've identified a hazard you need to determine how likely it is to occur, what you can do to prevent it occurring and documenting a date that you can demonstrate that you've done it within the next 12 months.

In the **second** column you put who it might affect (eg the cat and the client who will be distressed at the loss of her precious moggy).

In the **third** column you write what measures you are putting in place to stop the hazard from happening (eg keeping the cat in another room).

In the **fourth** column you estimate how likely it is to happen and if it **was** to happen, what would the consequences of it happening be (there's a fairly low risk of you killing the cat but if you did you would have to face the considerable wrath of the client!).

You also need to consider who is responsible - is it the client or is it you?) And then have you noted whether you need to do some extra actions that you may not have considered before?

And **finally** - how often does this need to be checked?

## If you work as an employee

So far we've talked about Health and Safety as if you are self-employed.

If you work as an employee for someone else (a gym or health studio for example), they should have a written Health and Safety Policy for you to look at and procedures for you to follow. What's more, there should be a health and safety officer appointed by them to whom you can talk and ask questions about things you are not sure of. However, a useful website which contains a wealth of information is that of the UK Health and Safety Executive: [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

## What to do when things go wrong

Despite your best efforts, despite the fact that you may have written impeccable risk assessments and asked all the right questions, there are unfortunately but inevitably going to be things that constitute an emergency. With luck they will only be minor accidents or injuries such as a pulled muscle or a twisted ankle but you need to be prepared for all eventualities. Sometimes you'll get a client with an underlying health condition who doesn't feel well but who dismisses it and thinks they'll be all right. That's why it's important for you to be aware of the health condition and be on the lookout for signs that they are struggling so that you can take preventative action before things get worse.

Some injuries and accidents are fairly minor – a cut finger, a bruised shin – the sort of thing we all get from time to time. These can be dealt with using the **First Aid Box** (again which is a vital part of your equipment). But there are other things which need specialist medical attention. If for example, a client faints, has an epileptic seizure, a diabetic "hypo", over-exerts themselves so that they can't breathe properly or has something that looks like a heart attack, that's when you need to call for help. If you're unsure whether to dial 999 and ask for an ambulance, dialling 111 will put you on the line with someone who can give you advice as to what to do. (For more details of such occurrences, see below)

Mostly however, you will encounter "soft-tissue injuries" which are sprains and strains to muscles, ligaments and tendons (soft tissue) rather than broken bones. Obviously with broken bones you need to get them to hospital but with soft tissue there are immediate procedures which the NHS recommend before deciding what the next step should be. It's known by the acronym **PRICE** which means:

- **Protection** – protect the affected area from further injury – for example by using a support
- **Rest** – avoid exercise and reduce your daily physical activity. Using crutches or a walking stick may help if you can't put weight on your ankle or knee. A sling may help if you've injured your shoulder.

- **Ice** – apply an ice-pack to the affected area for 15-20 minutes every two or three hours. A bag of frozen peas or similar, will work well. Wrap the icepack in a towel so that it doesn't touch the skin and cause ice-burn
- **Compression** – use elastic compression bandages during the day to limit swelling. Don't make the bandage so tight that it stops their blood flowing!
- **Elevation** – keep the injured body part raised above the level of the heart whenever possible. This may also help reduce swelling.

For more help, the NHS website is very useful.

Go to [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) and look under "Sports Injuries"

## Dealing with a Serious Emergency

If the situation is such that you need to call for help, such as an ambulance, then it is important that you are familiar with the procedure.

- Firstly, if the emergency is serious, it is likely that the casualty themselves as well as any people around them will be panicking and/or upset. People may be in tears or shouting for someone (you) to DO something. Emotions will be running high, so it is absolutely vital **that you remain calm**.
- Do a quick risk assessment to identify any possible further danger to the casualty and others standing around.
- Decide whether you need to telephone the emergency services and if you DO decide to, call them straight away. Rest assured that you will never be reprimanded for ringing 999. If they don't think it's something they should deal with, they'll tell you to ring 111. It isn't a problem.
- Make the area safe. There may still be a problem with the thing(s) that caused the emergency, so deal with those.
- Try to get some assistance from someone (a colleague, a friend, a neighbour). If necessary, ask a bystander to get someone for you. Or telephone someone yourself. In an emergency, people often respond well to a firm, calm and **specific** request.
- Again, speaking calmly, reassure the casualty. Tell them everything is going to be all right and that you are experienced in matters like this. In other words, give them some comfort. Make sure they are warm and as relaxed as possible.

## Calling for Help

- Once again, however panicky or upset you are feeling inside, **being calm is essential. Remaining cool and calm will show your professionalism at its best.**
- When you call emergency services, they will ask for details, such as the exact address and location of where the incident has occurred. Answer the questions in a calm manner and give the answers with as much detail as they ask for.

- Tell them what condition the casualty is in and any treatment that has been administered.
- Ask someone to meet the ambulance so that it can get to the casualty as quickly as possible.

While waiting for the ambulance and/or shortly afterwards:

- Make sure that other people who may be involved, know the correct procedure for emergencies
- Make sure that the environment is safe for everyone involved
- Report what has happened to your line manager or -
- If you ARE self employed, the likelihood of you lone-working is high, so your procedures and policies must reflect this (eg do you always have a mobile phone with you?)

Also:

- You **MUST** fill out an accident/incident report which should be part of your accident book (see above). It is a statutory requirement for such reports to be kept for three years which is why we suggest an Accident Book rather than an odd bit of paper which can easily get lost.

And finally:

- For a serious incident, you need to follow the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) and submit a formal report. To know whether your incident is serious enough to warrant such a report and if it is, to get a form to fill in, go to the Health and Safety Executive website for help:  
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/>