

LECTURE 1

Delivering Small Group Training

By Cathal Fanning

- **Small Group Sessions**
- **Components of a Group Session**
- **Other Considerations**
- **Different Types of Group Session**
- **Final Thoughts**

Delivering Small Group Sessions

In this lecture we explore small group training. It is an area growing in popularity in the fitness industry at present for many reasons. It allows the trainer to see more clients in a typical working day/week, and allows the client to gain access to dedicated training in a more affordable way - and more frequently. It is a good way to showcase your training talents to groups of people.

There is a distinct difference between small group training and classes and that lies in the numbers of attendees. There is a balance to strike between the volume of people in attendance and the attention it is possible to pay to all participants. Both classes and group sessions have great benefits however, which we will discuss now.

- Simple to plan as it's a group session.
- Not as physical as other sessions such as spin.
- Can provide additional revenue.
- Showcases skills for potential 1-2-1 clients.
- Build rapport with many people at once.

Working out in a group can increase motivation and help people to achieve more than they could working out alone. Taking part in group personal training sessions is often cheaper than 1-2-1 sessions.

Training as part of a group can make you feel a further sense of commitment to the group, so you are more likely to attend and not let the group down.

Working out as part of a group can give extra enjoyment through being part of a social group.

Working out in a group can give you an extra dimension of added competition. Because you are in a group you are also more likely to try other exercises that you wouldn't on your own.

By working out in a group with a trainer, you will benefit from clear instruction, helping you to move effectively.



So there are lots of benefits...what about any things you need to work around in small group sessions.

Monitoring Techniques

This becomes harder the bigger the group gets. For this reason, unless you are able to spend enough time delivering technique or have a group that are already proficient, you might find more complex exercises are not appropriate here.

Levels of Ability

You may be in a group that features people of varying fitness levels. It can be hard as an instructor to tailor the session to all participants and some may feel like they are being held back while others might not be able to keep up.

Personalisation

It is impossible to perfectly tailor a session to each individual. Every session should be planned with a specific focus in mind such as weight loss or interval training. Then you can apply the principles of this type of training to the session instead of to the individual.

Progression

It may be difficult to monitor exactly how much progress each participant is making as the focus is not on the individual. In addition, the sessions may not be progressed each week or even feature staple exercises throughout each week.

One-to-One Time

There is less time available for 1-2-1 to help with things like technique, form or motivation.

Hopefully you can see the value in small group sessions at this point. The ability to work with multiple people in one session, as well as the development of your skills in exercise delivery is invaluable.

Components of a Group Session

Let's now discuss the components of a group session. There are obviously similarities with 1-2-1 sessions as well as classes in terms of the inclusion of a warm-up, main session and cool-down but within those components what do we need to consider that differs?

Preparation



Here you need to think of the location, environment, risk assessment, what equipment you need and how much of it. During this time you need to consider contingencies.

Warm-up



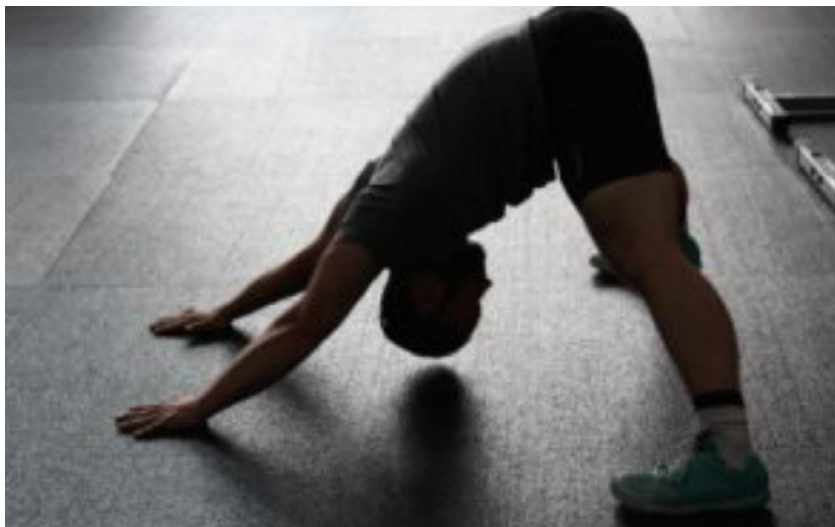
Consider the group as a whole. The more people you have the more likely it is that you need to cover generally troublesome areas like the hips and thoracic spine in your warmup, while also raising the heart rate. You should issue a verbal PAR-Q here too.

Main Workout



Here you need to select exercises that are relatively inclusive. If you add in complex exercises, you might exclude some of the less-experienced participants..

Cool-down



Like 1-2-1 sessions, this should be centred around the muscles worked in the session and be static in nature. Offer feedback and gain feedback from the group.

Other things you might want to think about also when planning a group session...

- Safety – you need to be even more diligent in a group setting in terms of safety as the participants are a risk for each other. How will you manage the safety of the group where equipment is involved?
- Participant's exercise technique – striking a balance between challenging people and making the exercises inclusive can be difficult. You need to ensure more advanced participants are challenged yet the less experienced ones can also perform the exercises.
- Work/rest ratio – important that you consider this against the exercises and their intensity, complexity and demand. In group sessions, using time periods for work and rest are usually a good idea as this allows everyone to work at their own level. If you use reps you will have some people waiting for others to finish.
- Exercise order – making sure you don't overload particular muscles repeatedly in exercise after exercise is a good idea.
- Equipment – if you're using kettlebells, weights or barbells, have you got enough variety? Have you left anything for use by members of the gym who aren't in your session? Will you have to spend time changing the weights etc?

Circuits

Circuit-style sessions have been a part of the fitness landscape for a long time. They offer lots of variety to the participant - the ability to utilise variable training styles - and for the instructor there are many options for session design. You can make this more interesting and fun with group games and partner-work. There are lots of different types of sessions you can design beyond the standard 'satellite circuit'.

Make sure you turn up early, plan the session fully, and ensure the space and equipment you require are available. Ensure you set out your working week to allow enough time for adequate preparation for the sessions you have on your shift. Of course, there will be in-session amendments as you progress with a client. Some of your plan they will find easier than you thought, and some will be harder. However, having the session planned and ready is important as a structure to work from.

Consider any issues you know of, the equipment available, the aspirations of the client and also have a contingency prepared.

Floor-Based Training

Bodyweight can often be overlooked in terms of its variety and effectiveness in training. In addition, it is a very easy option to consider when it comes to planning and preparing the session. Small equipment can be added to the session if you want to include more options, but all you really need is an area of clear floor space to deliver the session.

Make sure you turn up early, plan the session fully, and ensure the space and equipment you require are available.

Cardiovascular

Sessions set around a particular discipline such as studio cycling, battle ropes and running classes can be a great way to train small groups. All participants use the same equipment throughout the session which makes progressions and regressions easier to manage.

Small Equipment Sessions

Suspension training sessions and kettlebells have become a really popular choice for small group training in health clubs. The dedicated training space of a suspension rig, and the floor space utilised for kettlebell training are generally situated on the gym floor, which is a great place to showcase the instructor's skills. The adaptability and variety offered by each of these pieces of equipment is one of the reasons for their popularity and success.

