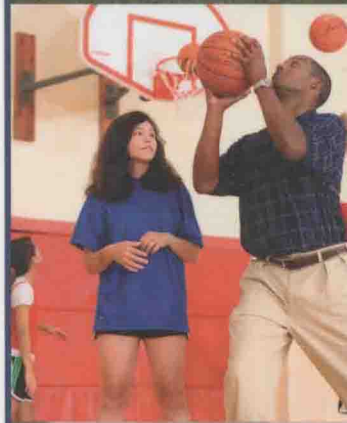
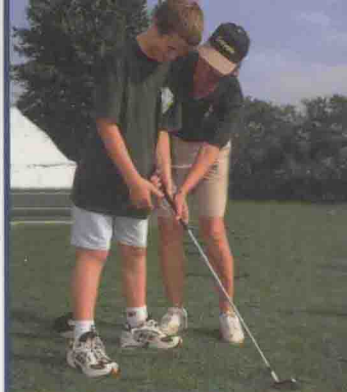


CAREERS in SPORT, FITNESS, and EXERCISE

*The authoritative guide
for landing the job
of your dreams*



AMERICAN KINESIOLOGY ASSOCIATION

CAREERS IN SPORT, FITNESS, AND EXERCISE

American Kinesiology Association

Shirl J. Hoffman,
Project Coordinator



Careers in Sport, Fitness, and Exercise

竞技，体能和锻炼的职业



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CAREERS IN SPORT, FITNESS, AND EXERCISE

American Kinesiology Association

**Shirl J. Hoffman,
Project Coordinator**

Preface

This book, a joint effort of the American Kinesiology Association and Human Kinetics, is the first book of its kind. No other source presents detailed descriptions of the many options available to those seeking a career within the spheres of physical activity—namely exercise, sports, and fitness. The general information you can find on websites tends to be insufficient and superficial, lacking the depth and comprehensiveness we offer you here. In this book you will find for the first time anywhere the insights and advice of university professionals whose daily work involves preparing students for their careers. Bringing their enormous funds of knowledge about the exercise, sport, fitness, and physical activity industry to bear on the kinds of problems young people frequently encounter when exploring careers, these professionals have produced a resource invaluable not only for students and parents but for secondary school counselors and university advisors as well.

Kinesiology is the name that has emerged for the universe that houses the exciting worlds of physical activity. This term, kinesiology, has been adopted by many of the leading colleges and universities in North America, but some departments continue to use the terms *exercise and sport science*, *physical education*, or *health and human performance*. We are all talking about the same thing. The field of kinesiology—encompassing exercise, sports, fitness, and physical activity—is amazingly broad, offering an astonishing range of diverse careers in such areas as athletic training, sports medicine, director of community sport programs, personal fitness trainer, sport psychologist, physical education teacher, university researcher and teacher, fitness leader for geriatric centers, football coach, athletic director, and sports marketer—just to name a few. For students, parents, high school guidance counselors, and university academic advisors hoping to get firm footing in the exciting and flourishing cosmos of kinesiology, this book will be indispensable.

In chapters 1 and 2 we present a broad perspective of career development in the field, addressing the important questions students have when first beginning to explore their potential careers. In the rest of the book we provide the fundamentals, the essential information, on career opportunities available to those who graduate with a degree in kinesiology. Careers are grouped into separate but related categories. The many kinds of careers in the fitness industry are covered in chapter 3. Chapter 4 explores career opportunities in teaching, coaching, sport instruction, and sport psychology. In chapter 5 we discuss careers available for those who study sport management. Chapter 6 does the same for athletic training and sports medicine. Chapter 7 presents important insights for the increasing numbers of students enrolling in kinesiology programs who have set their postgraduate sights on careers in allied health fields such as physical therapy and medicine. Finally, in chapter 8, we discuss career possibilities for those considering the teaching of kinesiology at the college level or pursuing a career as a researcher.

Each chapter presents the skills and knowledge you will need to succeed in each career. You will also find helpful advice to increase your chances of success, an honest discussion of the benefits and drawbacks of each type of work, the physical and social settings in which you will probably work, a description of the type of co-workers with whom you will collaborate, the educational and certification requirements required to secure and maintain each career, and future economic prospects for the career. Advice from the writers is supplemented by helpful observations by professionals and clinicians working in the area, and from students preparing to do so.

To select a career that best matches your talents and interests you will want to do more than read this book. As the authors point out, career exploration must be a proactive process, a journey in which you take time to investigate many potential destinations. Think of this book as a map to help you explore the vast universe of kinesiology and to reach your destination. There are no shortcuts in this journey; your path to discovery requires a serious investment of time, energy, and thought. This book, together with your parents, friends, teachers, and advisors, can provide the crucial information you need to make the best choices, but in the end, it is up to *you* to choose your career path. A career is lifelong, stretching into years of self-discovery. We wish you luck and happiness on your journey.

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Examining the Big Picture

Shirl J. Hoffman, EdD

Choosing a career in the field of sport, exercise, and fitness is more complicated today than ever before. Never before have so many career options been available in so many exciting areas. Those interested in pursuing a career in sport can choose from coaching, sport marketing, sport promotion, athletic administration, sport officiating, athletic training, sport medicine, sport psychology, and sport law—and the list could go on. A career in the exercise and fitness industry can be very rewarding, but will it be a career as a personal trainer, exercise rehabilitation specialist, conditioning coach for athletes, fitness manager or owner of a gym or spa, exercise specialist for elderly populations, corporate fitness specialist, or in some other fitness specialty? You might have decided that a career in teaching sport and exercise or coaching is the best path for you, but will it be a career in teaching physical education (elementary, high school, or college), high-level sport instruction (golf pro, tennis pro, swimming pro, gymnastic instructor, etc.), exercise instruction at a fitness facility, or specialized instruction for those with disabilities?

Books, guidance counselors, parents, friends, coaches, teachers, Internet career sites . . . these all can be helpful to you in selecting your career. But ultimately the responsibility for making the decision is yours and yours alone. This being the case, you should take the decision process seriously by learning as much as you can about the careers that are out there. Career management begins before you even

set foot on a college campus! There are specific steps to take. For example, talking to professors who teach in programs that prepare students for various careers can be a big help. Most professors will set aside time to talk to prospective students, but be sure to have your questions ready before showing up for the appointment. Talking to professionals working in a career area also can help you narrow your choices, but again, enter these discussions with well-thought-out questions about the career. When a professor or professional makes time to talk to you, they are doing you a favor, so act accordingly.

Serving as a volunteer in some aspect of the sport, exercise, and fitness industry is always a good idea; in fact, previous experience as a volunteer is mandatory for some careers. If you think you would like to be a high school basketball coach, ask a coach at a local school if you can help him or her on a volunteer basis; if you want to work as a fitness consultant, volunteer to work in a fitness facility. If you think a career in physical therapy is for you, volunteer at a local clinic. Because you lack the necessary training and education, it is unlikely that these experiences will involve you in the specific type of work you will do as a professional, but they will give experience in the work environment, help you establish a professional network, and buff up your résumé.

Before you do anything else, though, you should step back and look at all the career options available to you. Sometimes a clear sense of the big picture can help you make the best choice. In this book we provide that picture. The authors are experts who have their fingers on the pulse of developments in specific career areas; all of them work in higher education where they have years of experience preparing college students for careers in sport, exercise, and fitness. Most provide career counseling on a regular basis. Each of the chapters here offers in-depth information about the most popular career tracks in each career category, including information about what the job entails, where you will work, with whom you will work, the education and certifications you will need, and the future outlook for the career.

Locating a First-Rate Kinesiology Department to Prepare for Your Career

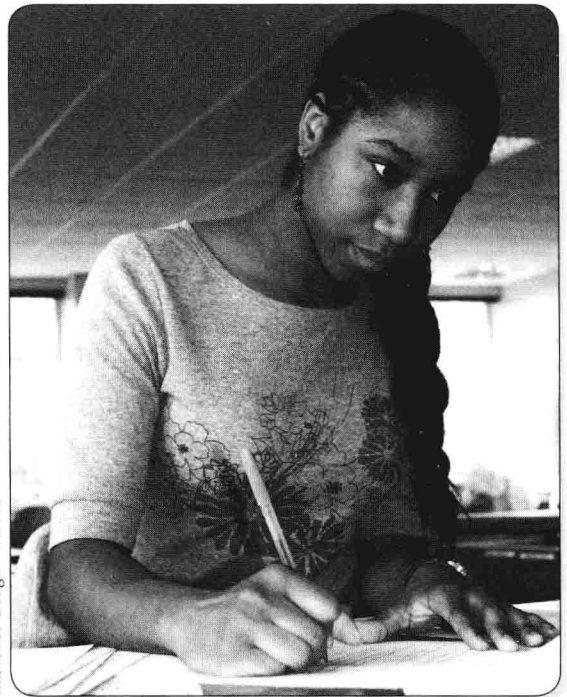
Often the key to a successful career is finding a college or university program that matches your interests and career aspirations. The **American Kinesiology Association (AKA)** is an association of over 100 college and university departments nationwide that prepare students for kinesiology careers. On its website, the **AKA** provides information regarding departments offering preparation in the career tracks discussed in this book. You can access this information at www.americankinesiology.org; click on the “Career Center” tab and then “Careers in Sport, Fitness, and Exercise.” You will find instructions for identifying departments that sponsor curriculums matching your career interests.

THINKING BROADLY ABOUT CAREER CHOICES

In a perfect world everyone would find a career that is exciting, personally rewarding, challenging, and well paying. But this isn't a perfect world, which is probably one reason why over five million people of ages 44 to 70 are currently embarking on “encore” (second or third) careers. Even though these midstream career changes often turn out very well, they also can be disruptive to personal and family life and set you back in your progress toward your ultimate career goals. Thus, all things considered, it pays to choose your career path early and carefully, taking into account your personal preferences and talents. You probably won't be satisfied with a job simply because it pays well. If you are like most people you want a job that is respected by the community, is performed under good working conditions, provides reasonable time off for leisure pursuits, and offers reasonable pay. Most people also prefer careers that contribute to the betterment of society, require thinking and creativity, and allow them the freedom to make important decisions about their work. Finding a career that meets all these requirements can be a formidable challenge.

Careers and Jobs

Usually the term “career” connotes work that incorporates all or most of the characteristics listed previously. Unlike a “job,” which usually is a simple matter of working in return for money, a career is a lifelong pursuit that requires enormous personal investment and prolonged training. Usually careers reward workers with considerable personal meaning—a sense that they are making a valuable contribution to the community or to society at large. A job generally requires little in the way of intellectual capacity or creativity; most jobs are performed under the supervision of someone else. In many cases, jobs are part time and the work they entail is viewed by workers as tedious or burdensome. Someone lands a job as a dishwasher at a restaurant, a cashier at a movie theater, or as a newspaper delivery person. By contrast, teachers, lawyers, physical therapists, exercise rehabilitation specialists, or athletic directors pursue careers as lifetime investments.



Laurence Gough – Fotolia

Choosing a career requires careful thinking and planning.

Such positions involve a great deal of decision making, planning, advanced education, and a commitment to professional growth. They also require a certain amount of career management with an eye toward advancement.

Professions and Trades

Another category of work is known as the skilled trades—also called blue-collar work. Often these jobs pay workers on an hourly basis and offer few benefits. Electricians, machinists, plumbers, and heating and air conditioning workers are blue-collar workers, as are those who perform maintenance or assembly jobs. These jobs usually require technical training (either formal or informal) and might pay very well. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the demand for such workers is likely to be great over the next many years. Usually those who work in a skilled trade see their work as a career, often shaping their entire lives around their expertise. Sometimes a skilled tradesman will refer to the “professional quality” of work they do, but most are not considered professionals as that term is understood in the workplace. By contrast, almost all the types of work described in this book are truly professions. Those who create their careers around them enjoy the advantages that professionals enjoy. They also take on the responsibilities of a professional.

What do we mean by professions and professionals? A *profession* is a distinctive type of work characterized by the following criteria:

- ▶ Centered on supplying services to a specific clientele
- ▶ Requires mastery of complex knowledge and skills
- ▶ Guided by formal and informal ethical codes intended to preserve the health and well-being of clients
- ▶ Prescribed certain expectations and standards that define acceptable conduct

Let’s look briefly at a few of these characteristics as they apply to professionals—the group of individuals who are engaged in a particular profession:

▶ **Professionals master complex knowledge and skills.** One thing that sets professionals apart from laborers or blue-collar tradesmen is the level of knowledge required to perform their work. Anyone who has watched a plumber or computer repair technician recognizes that they usually possess a high level of technical knowledge and skill. But professionals are able to draw on a broader knowledge base anchored in research and theory. Professionals often describe their work as “translating theory into practice.” Athletic trainers need to know more than how to tape an ankle or rehab a shoulder injury; they must have mastered a body of knowledge of anatomy, physiology, and applied biomechanics that allows them to put each situation they face in a very broad perspective. The skills that professionals possess are usually not manual skills but cognitive skills. Professionals make decisions based on their own professional judgments, and this requires a solid background of theoretical and factual knowledge that permits them to deduce the



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Attending conferences offers opportunities for professionals to connect with others in their specific field and to rejuvenate their knowledge base.

correct steps that should be taken. The same is true for physical education teachers, athletic directors, exercise rehab specialists, and fitness programmers.

Most of the careers discussed in this book require, at a minimum, a baccalaureate degree offered in programs that prepare students to think in broad and complex ways and to solve important problems they will make as professionals. For most professionals, an undergraduate degree is not the end of their education—it is just the beginning. Professionals must keep current on the latest knowledge being developed in their field. One way they do this is through membership in professional associations or societies. These associations usually publish materials and hold regional and national conferences. For example, physical education teachers might be members of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance; exercise and conditioning specialists might belong to the American College of Sports Medicine or to the National Strength and Conditioning Association; and athletic trainers might be members of the National Athletic Trainers Association. Each career track described in this book has at least one relevant professional association that serves its members by offering updated information about professional practice. If you are committed to becoming a professional you must also be committed to learning, not merely in college but throughout your career. True professionals are by nature curious. They want to know about the latest developments in their fields and how they can improve their skills and knowledge.

► **Professionals perform services for clients.** Tradesmen have customers; professionals serve clients, patients, or students. Providing service to specific

populations, ideally in the spirit of helpfulness and concern, is the lifeblood of the professions. Although (unfortunately) not all professionals are as service oriented as they should be, most who work in the sport, exercise, and fitness arena are committed to their clients. Possessing a strong desire to help people is a fundamental requirement for anyone entering the professions, but being a successful professional requires more than wanting to give a helping hand. A spirit of helpfulness unaccompanied by a level of competence that enables you to render actual assistance isn't likely to keep you employed. A golf pro who wants to help but is unable to detect the flaw in a student's swing, a physical education teacher who lacks the skill to adapt a lesson to a class's needs, or a rehabilitation exercise specialist unable to motivate an elderly resident of a nursing home to exercise can't render services to their clients despite their keen desire to do so.

► **Professionals adhere to established ethical codes.** Usually clients have faith in professionals to act in their best interests. Professionals who violate this trust by placing their own interests ahead of the client's interests are not only a disservice to their profession but risk being sanctioned by their colleagues. Usually professional associations publish ethical standards and codes of conduct that outline acceptable professional behavior. Figure 1.1 lists some of the ethical principles published by the Association of Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) intended to ensure that sport psychologists act in the best interests of their clients.

If you are committed to pursuing a career as a professional you must also be committed to serving. This means your career objectives should extend far beyond the goal of bettering yourself financially or advancing your status in the workplace. Good professionals also set their sights on making solid and lasting contributions to the betterment of society, and they do this through selfless serving of their clientele.

► **Professionals adhere to standards of their own subculture.** Although professionals work in a variety of contexts, general professional standards apply no matter the locale in which they work. Politeness and respect toward those they are serving are essential. Professionals tend to be well organized. They do not (usually) work on an hourly basis, but they don't hesitate to work extra hours when a task requires it. They often work weekends. They dress according to accepted occupational standards and are attentive to matters of personal hygiene and grooming. A sport program director that comes to a board meeting in sweaty clothes more appropriate for a workout, a cardiac rehabilitation specialist who is always late for her sessions, or a personal trainer with bad hygiene are not conducting themselves in a professional manner. Of course these general expectations apply to professionals in any field, but each profession usually has a set of specific expectations used to judge the appropriateness of the professional's conduct. For example, fitness leaders and physical education teachers might be expected to model the physically active life, to refrain from smoking, and to maintain a level of fitness appropriate for their age.

The sooner you become socialized into your chosen profession and learn the expectations of the work culture, the more valuable you will be to prospective

Ethical Principles and Standards for Members of the Association of Applied Sport Psychology

Sport psychologists who work with athletes and who are members of the Association of Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) are expected to adhere to a strict code of professional ethics. The association has published an ethics code for its members that covers a multitude of issues. The code has as its centerpiece five general principles that can be summarized as follows:

- **Competence:** Members of AASP should keep abreast of their field and recognize the limitations of their knowledge and skills. They are committed to protecting the welfare of all whom they serve.
- **Integrity:** Members of the AASP are honest and fair in reporting their qualifications, services, products, and fees and avoid improper dual relationships.
- **Respect for people's rights and dignity:** Members of AASP respect the rights of those with whom they work to confidentiality, self-determination, and autonomy
- **Concern for others' welfare:** Members of AASP work to resolve conflicts that arise with colleagues, and they do not exploit or mislead others.
- **Social responsibility:** AASP members are aware of their responsibility to the community; they make their work public so as to benefit others and strive to prevent misuse of their work.

Figure 1.1 Professional associations use standards to define acceptable professional behavior.

Reprinted, by permission, from American Association of Sport Physiology.

Available: <http://appliedsportpsych.org/resource-center/professionals>

employers when seeking a position. For this reason, growing numbers of students in college professional preparatory programs seek opportunities to immerse themselves in the professional subculture of their anticipated careers by volunteering to work in clinics, schools, and community agencies while still enrolled in college. Although usually not counted as course work, such extracurricular activities provide experiences to give you a head start when the time comes for applying for career positions after graduation.

TACKLING A TOUGH DECISION

Some people know from an early age what career they want to follow. They might have been influenced by parents or friends or by a professional while still in high school. Many young people choose to become coaches because of the influence of their high school coach. A young athlete who has suffered an injury and been rehabilitated through the services of an athletic trainer or physical therapist might make the decision to help rehabilitate others who have been injured in sports. But

for many people selecting a career is an agonizing task. Difficulty in making the tough decision can be a crippling barrier to getting an early start on their career. Uncertainty about what to do with their lives plagues some young people long after they have enrolled in college.

Why is making a career decision so difficult for some people? Interestingly, the topic has been extensively researched by those working in the area of counseling psychology—an indication of just how prevalent career indecisiveness is among young people. It appears that many factors can be a hindrance in deciding on a career. Lack of motivation, for example, not only causes some people to postpone making a decision but often prevents them from rationally investigating career possibilities. Some college students refer to the prospect of selecting a career as entering the “great black hole.”

Failure to have access to adequate information can also be a barrier to making a career decision. This might include lack of information about your own capabilities and interests. In such cases a young person might not know the answer to two very important questions: *What am I able to do?* and *What do I want to do?* The first question regards capabilities. What special interests and talents do you possess that might be exploited in the workplace? Answers to this question usually require the services of a career counselor who, through skillful questioning, testing, and analysis of your responses on occupational aptitude tests can help you narrow the general category of work that best matches your abilities. Many of these tests are based on psychologist John Holland’s research, which has identified six vocational personalities and work environments: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. Hypothetically, each personality type lends itself to specific career clusters (figure 1.2). Other self-administered career aptitude tests are easily found on the Internet—you might check out Career Explorer, Job Diagnosis, and Career Colleges, to name a few. See the Resources at the end of this book for details.

You might find that answering the second question (What do I want to do?) is much easier if you have first answered What am I able to do? Ideally, talking with a career counselor or accessing online career aptitude tests will lead you to a professional career that you do not simply like, but one that you like passionately. But even with test results showing which category of work best suits your abilities and interests, making the final decision still can be challenging. Taking the time to answer the questions in figure 1.3 might be a big help in the process. Those who have engaged in such a rational, systematic career search are least likely to be plagued by career indecision. Yet in the end, you and you alone must make your choice. Putting off the decision is deciding not to decide!

PREPARING FOR YOUR CAREER

Having identified a career, your next step is to seek out the best preparation for it. Again, the advantage goes to those who have already begun to think about a career before they graduate from high school. Selecting high school courses that

Holland's Personality Types and Careers in Kinesiology*

- **Realistic personality:** Values practical and mechanical experiences such as operating machines, growing crops, or raising animals. Does not enjoy social interaction and would not likely enjoy teaching. Possible career choices include police work, firefighting, and electrician or carpentry work. Career opportunities are limited for this personality type in the field of kinesiology.

- **Investigative personality:** Possesses superior skills at analyzing and understanding science and math problems. They tend not to be leaders or salespersons; they are more comfortable in laboratory environments. Those who pursue careers as researchers in exercise physiology, biomechanics of sport, sport sociology, or other topics in kinesiology might have investigative personalities.

- **Artistic personality:** Enjoys creative activities such as art, drama, crafts, dance, music, or creative writing; generally avoids highly ordered or repetitive activities. Artistic personalities are best suited to work as writers, actors, artists, musicians, or dancers.

- **Social personality:** Enjoys helping people; values friendliness and trustworthiness in others. This personality tends to excel in careers such as nursing, counseling, dental hygiene, physical therapy, and medicine. Social students often pursue careers in athletic training and sport medicine.

- **Enterprising personality:** Tends to be ambitious, energetic, sociable. People with this personality are self-starters who enjoy positions of leadership. They are less interested in analyzing or conducting scientific observations than in getting something practical accomplished. Often they pursue careers in business or politics. Managers of fitness facilities, coaches, and school principals are likely to have enterprising personalities.

- **Conventional personality:** Enjoys working with machines, numbers, facts, and records. They prefer highly structured, orderly work that follows a set plan. Conventional personality types are often bookkeepers, bank tellers, or clerks. Most careers in kinesiology are not readily compatible with this personality type.

*These personality types are not mutually exclusive. Two or more types can be found in the same individual.

Figure 1.2 Your personality type matters when selecting a career.

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provide you with the basic knowledge you need for beginning a college program in kinesiology is essential. Most (but not all) careers connected with kinesiology deal with the moving body. Thus coursework that emphasizes biology, chemistry, physiology, and psychology helps provide this foundation. On the other hand, if you envision a career in sport management, extra coursework in business or management is helpful. If your career plans are to study kinesiology as preparatory