

SAILING FIT

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SAILFIT Inc

Happy New Year everyone! I thought I would start the New Year out on the right foot. Many of you have given me great compliments on my articles for which I am very appreciative. One of the biggest questions I hear is "What is **ACE**?" and "How did you become certified?" So, I want to give everyone a little background about my certification and what to look for when seeking out a trainer.

In September of 2002 the CBS evening news featured a story entitled "Lawsuit Exposes Health Club Secrets". A Manhattan health club was sued for \$320 million on a claim that they "recklessly" prescribed nutritional supplements that resulted in the death of a client. The client was a 37 year old woman who died after suffering a stroke during a workout session with her trainer. CBS had stated that the "lawsuit has helped expose two health club secrets. The first is a certified trainer isn't certified. The second is there is no standard-national, state or otherwise-for what the word certified means."

I found this very disturbing for a few reasons. The first being that I worked very hard to become certified and still continue to study to make sure I provide the best service I can. The next is that I feel many people are made to believe that they are working with a professional because they do not know what to look for or the appropriate questions to ask. For example many gyms have personal Trainers available for their customers. Did you know that many of the trainers are only deemed "certified" by that gym? This means that whatever the company feels appropriate to teach their trainers is what makes them "certified". Unfortunately, many times this includes what products and supplements the gym is trying to sell at that time.

I am hoping to help make everyone aware of what to look for and what to ask when seeking a fitness professional. At the same time I hope this will give you a sense of confidence in myself as a professional and the certification that I carry.

Choosing a Quality Fitness Certification

Fitness certifications and their respective organizations can be differentiated by a variety of factors. This includes how long the organizations have been certifying, whether they operate on a for-profit or a nonprofit basis, how their certification exam is developed and administered, and the level of respect and recognition they have within the industry. The American Council on Exercise® (ACE) strongly recommends that you thoroughly research any certification program and organization you are considering to determine how it rates among industry experts.

Will It Stand Up in Court? To protect yourself and the public, a legally defensible certification is crucial. The following three factors will be considered by any court of law reviewing a certification exam:

- 1. Validity:** Validity refers to the extent to which an exam measures what it is supposed to measure. For an exam to demonstrate that a candidate has achieved a certain knowledge level, content validity (job-related-ness) is essential.

2. Reliability: Reliability is a trait of how consistent and stable exam scores are. High reliability is desirable since it reflects superior score confidence. Candidates should receive approximately the same score if they took the exam twice with no additional preparation between tests.

3. Lack of Bias: The content of the certification exam should be appropriate for all qualified candidates regardless of race, religion, gender, age or reading-comprehension level. *ACE exams are legally defensible and follow accepted certification practices to ensure validity, reliability and lack of bias.*

How is the Exam Developed? The following outlines the exam-development process that adheres to accepted certification practices. This ensures that certified professionals meet minimum standards of knowledge and skills necessary to provide safe and effective fitness instruction.

1. **Job Analysis/Role Delineation:** A group of industry experts analyzes the specific job requirements in order to develop an outline of the tasks, knowledge and skills required to perform the job effectively (e.g. group fitness instruction, personal training, etc.).
2. **Validation Study:** A research survey is conducted to determine the validity of the job analysis. The survey is sent to a large, national random sample of fitness professionals for validation.
3. **Item Writing:** A national and representative panel of industry experts develops exam questions that are tied to exam specifications and referenced to acceptable texts or documents.
4. **Exam Construction:** The questions are reviewed, selected and approved by an exam committee. The constructed exam is then forwarded to an independent testing service for final editing.
5. **Cut Score Determination:** The passing score is determined as a standard for public protection. Each question is rated by a group of industry experts using criterion-referenced procedures. The experts estimate the percentage of minimally competent professionals that will answer each question correctly. The passing score is then calculated and based on the overall degree of difficulty.
6. **Continual Exam Evaluation:** Following an exam administration, there is a continual evaluation and analysis of each question to help ensure validity. If a question is determined flawed, it is reworked or replaced. A new exam-development process begins every 5 years. *ACE exams are developed using the six-point exam development process and are guided by standards accepted by the American Psychological Association, the American Educational Research Association and the National Council on Measurement in Education.*

How Is the Exam Administered? There are a number of exam-administration procedures that should be followed to ensure validity. Some certifying organizations administer their own exams, while others employ independent testing companies. An independent testing company helps to ensure exam security, integrity and the elimination of bias. Find out who administers the certification exam you are considering, and what procedures are in place to ensure integrity. *ACE exams are administered by Columbia Assessment Services, Inc., an independent professional testing company.*

The American Council on Exercise

ACE certifications are valid for two years. ACE-certified professionals must complete Continuing Education Credits in order to keep their certification current. ACE provides access to more than 3,000 continuing education programs to help certified professionals keep their fitness knowledge and certification current. Exam participants must be at least 18 years old and have current CPR certification. Average exam preparation time is 3-6 months. Adequate preparation for ACE exams varies depending on prior experience and education.

The American Council on Exercise (ACE) is a nonprofit organization committed to promoting active, healthy lifestyles and their positive effects on the mind, body and spirit. ACE pledges to enable all segments of society to enjoy the benefits of physical activity and protect the public against unsafe and ineffective fitness products and trends. ACE accomplishes this mission by setting certification and education standards for fitness instructors and through ongoing public education about the importance of exercise. All ACE certification exams are now formally recommended for college credit by the College Credit Recommendation Service, a branch of the American Council on Education, located in Washington, D.C.

I know this is all a little dull, but I feel it is important. Most of all I want you all to know that I don't just make these articles up out of thin air! For more information about ACE you can visit www.acefitness.org. I am interested to know what you would like to hear about. Anytime you think of something or just have a question feel free to contact me at www.sailfit.com or meke@sailfit.com.